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INSIDE



Shrewish Gig

Mount Carmel School's Theatre Club will stage its 17th theatrical production, *Taming the Shrew*, on Friday, May 21, and Saturday, May 22, at 6pm each night at GIG Discotheque in Garapan.

Page 10



'We've Moved'

SAIPANCELL Communications announced today that it has created an end-to-end solution that bridges the gap between e-tail and retail. The company's new store, which opened Monday, May 17, is located next to Pizza Hut on Middle Road.

Page 12



'Troy' Reigns

Muscle-bound Brad Pitt fought his way through scrawnier competition to help the Greek epic *"Troy"* claim the top spot at the box office with \$45.6 million.

Page 21

LibDay festivities relocate to Fishing Base



By BRAD E. RUSZALA
REPORTER

The 2004 Liberation Day festival will not be held at the American Memorial Park this year, as it has for the past 10; instead, it has been moved to the Fishing Base across from Kristo Rai church.

According to Vic Cepeda of the Saipan Mayor's Office, the decision to move the festival was made by Mayor Juan B. Tudela during a conference not too long ago. Cepeda said the mayor's decision was prompted after being informed that several vendors had complained about the restrictions placed on

them by the U.S. Parks Service.

"Every year, people request to move it; the people, the vendors want to move it because of the restrictions," said Cepeda.

Though he did not elaborate as to what the restrictions might be, Cepeda did mention that the insurance coverage

for the amusement rides was much higher on federal land as opposed to the rates available on that of the Municipal Public Lands Authority.

"Last year they couldn't afford the rides because the coverage was too high," he said.

See LIBDAY on Page 8

NMIRF seeks HPMPR extension

By LIBERTY DONES
REPORTER



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

TOURISM ACTIVISTS

Oleai Elementary School MY WAVE Tourism Club members man their booth during last Saturday's Cultural Day celebrations. The students last month painted trash drums that would be placed along the Beach Road pathway.

The NMI Retirement Fund Board has decided to seek an extension in Hawaii Pacific Medical Referral's contract—possibly up to December this year—due to the lack of a transition program.

This is a turnaround from two months ago when the Fund decided not to renew HPMPR's contract, which expires July 31 this year.

HPMPR is the third-party administrator for the health insurance aspect of the Fund's Group Health and Life Insurance program. The board has initially decided not to renew HPMPR's contract in preparation for the privatization of the program.

In an interview yesterday, however, Fund board chairman Joseph Reyes said the board sees it prudent to keep HPMPR services so as not to jeopardize

See NMIRF on Page 8

Human smuggling suspect acquitted

By LIBERTY DONES
REPORTER

Federal District court judge Alex Munson acquitted yesterday a Chinese national who was allegedly involved in a human smuggling attempt to Guam last month.

Munson said the U.S. Attorney's Office, which was prosecuting the case, failed to present evidence that would prove the allegation against Cheng Wen Shun beyond reasonable doubt.

See HUMAN on Page 8

PUTC to CUC: Is there a power crisis?

By EDITH G. ALEJANDRO
REPORTER

The House Committee on Public Utilities, Transportation, and Communications yesterday asked the Commonwealth Utilities Corp. to clarify reports that the Commonwealth's power system is on the verge of a "meltdown."

PUTC chair Timothy Villagomez asked CUC board chair Herman P. Sablan and executive director Lorraine A. Babauta to meet with the committee to discuss the urgency of the situation, which could affect businesses and potential investors in the Northern Marianas.

"The committee is very anxious to discuss the problems that are plaguing

the power generation system. The information that we have received described the situation as a serious crisis. Some have even suggested that the power system is on the verge of a meltdown," said the vice speaker.

Because of what he described as the "urgency of the situation due to numer-

See PUTC on Page 8

Local

‘Taxi bill won’t ensure survival of taxi biz’

By EDITH G. ALEJANDRO
REPORTER

The bill that mandates insurance for taxicabs, which recently passed the House of Representatives, would not ensure the continued existence of the taxi business in the CNMI, according to an insurance firm official.

Ely Buenaventura, general manager of Calvo’s Insurance Underwriters (CNMI) Inc., stressed yesterday that House Bill 14-166, now heading to the Senate, would not guarantee that all taxicabs would get insurance coverage as proposed under the measure.

Instead, he proposed that the Legislature amend the existing Taxi Law to provide for the same coverage limit as before—15-30-15 coverage for body and property damage—which is the same rate given to other vehicles such as vans and buses.

“To make it easier for the insurance companies, they can make the limit for the taxi the same as other private vehicles, buses, and vans. Under the Taxi Law, no taxicab can be operated without proof of insurance,” said the general manager.

The House had predicted that taxicabs in the CNMI will be totally phased out from the Commonwealth by September 2004 if the bill providing them insurance coverage is not passed on time.

Buenaventura explained that for a bill to be passed it should be effective and agreed upon by both parties. Otherwise, even if passed into law, affected businesses would still have the last word whether to accept insurance coverage for taxicabs or not.

“It is a losing proposition and they cannot compel insurance firms to do that. If the law is not acceptable to both parties, it is still a problem because insurance firms have no obligation to accommodate anyone that is naturally bad for the business,” he pointed out.

He said even if the bill passes the Senate, it is not a guarantee that taxicabs would be given premium coverage at several insurance firms in the CNMI. In fact, it is not a guarantee that the taxi business would continue [to exist] once the bill is a law.

“If they would commit to the agreeable insurance limit, the taxicabs can operate and

there would not be a problem. But if not, the taxicabs would still not get insurance and would not be able to operate,” Buenaventura added.

The bill, which passed the House last week, recommended that the minimum coverage of 25-50-25 and an Assigned Risk Plan for motor vehicle liability insurance be established.

The Risk Plan would be a point system that would affect the premium rates of vehicular liability coverage. The more points one accrue, the higher the insurance premium rates would be.

If not implemented by September 2004, all 193 taxicabs operating at the Duty Free Shoppers and around the island would stop operation when the insurance policy of each motor vehicle expires. To date, 30 percent of the total number of taxicabs have already halted operations.

According to taxi operators, the remaining 70 percent would stop operating by August 2004 due to the continued refusal of various insurance firms in the CNMI to grant them insurance coverage.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

DOING THEIR PART

Lt. Gov. Diego T. Benavente and his staff, Cathy Cepeda, pick up trash along the road going down Capitol Hill. As part of the Governor’s Adopt-a-Road program, the Governor and Lieutenant Governor led a team of over 40 Executive Branch employees, which dispersed along Isa Drive Monday evening to pick up trash from Sara Market down Capitol Hill to the Mobil station. “This program is designed to go all year,” said Benavente, “but it is especially timely now as we begin the islandwide cleanup for the 60th Commemoration of the Battles of Saipan and Tinian.” All government agencies have selected certain places along Saipan’s main thoroughfares to help keep clean.

BoE Guerrero: Give us the money

By SHAN SEMAN
REPORTER

Board of Education member Herman T. Guerrero continues to push for the release of operational funds for the Public School System.

Guerrero, who was given a tour of the William S. Reyes Elementary School on Friday, was prompted to comment on the need for the government to take a proactive role in education after seeing several classrooms with broken air conditioners and walls infested by termites.

“They need to provide the money for the classrooms,” he said. “It seems like there’s budget for other projects, and yet, we don’t have money to

tear down these termite infested classrooms. This is ridiculous.”

Guerrero said the money PSS receives is for personnel, but it is in “great need” of operational funds, as it will provide necessary renovations to classrooms.

“If you believe that the kids are the future of the Commonwealth, let’s have the best schools,” he said. “We’re dealing with the health of the kids and we need to provide the necessary environment for these kids to learn.”

He said he would again bring attention to the matter with the board in hopes of diverting funds from other community projects to the PSS.

“How can we fix the air conditioners and walls when there’s no

money?” he asked. “Where else are we supposed to go? We desperately need the money. Where’s the money, give us the money.”

The BoE member said WSR’s situation is one of the many problems schools in the CNMI are facing due to the lack of operational funds.

WSR principal Alfred Ada said he has been pushing for funds to renovate the classrooms since January. He assured, though, that the classrooms will be “as good as new” before the start of next school year.

“I’ve been pushing but PSS does not have money, so we will collect any money we have, like from our canteen, and fix the problem before next school year,” he said.

The health benefits of straight teeth

Apart from the obvious benefit of a much nicer smile, a straight set of teeth comes with a great positive socio-psychological effect, according to Dr. Robert S. Howard.

“With a prettier smile comes a great deal of self-confidence, allowing a person to interrelate with others more willingly both socially and at work. A person who does not want to smile because of crooked teeth will most likely be less likely to attain a good social and business life,” he said.

Howard explains there are even more important benefits to having straight teeth. He said that overlapping or crowded teeth make it very hard to keep one’s teeth clean.

“Tooth brushing cannot reach the overlapped teeth, and even flossing is difficult. This makes the probability of decay increase extremely. And thirdly, an even more important reason, crooked teeth affect the health of the supporting jaw bone and gums. In the process of chewing, as we bite

down, we generate hundreds of pounds per square inch of pressure on our teeth. If all the teeth do not equally share this pressure, then the few that do will be knocked loose overtime, losing the supporting bone and gums. Then they will become loose and painful and need to be extracted,” he explained.

Howard is Saipan’s sole on-island orthodontist and has been a member of the American Association Of Orthodontists for the last 26 years.

sister remy

DPS’ Camacho, officers sued over alleged neglect

By LIBERTY DONES
REPORTER

Department of Public Safety Commissioner Edward Camacho and 10 other DPS officers are being sued in federal court for alleged negligence of duty and failure to protect a person with disability under their custody. Steven Parks, through legal counsel David Banes, filed a civil suit against Camacho and

his staff yesterday, and is asking for at least \$100,000 in compensation, plus punitive damages and attorneys fees. Parks asked for a jury trial. He also petitioned the court to issue an injunction directing the defendants to implement procedures to ensure proper training in the future treatment of individuals with disabilities. Banes said that his client, who is suffering from post-traumatic stress order, was arrested fol-

lowing an altercation in which he allegedly slashed and punctured a vehicle at Payless store in Garapan on Nov. 24, 2003. In the process of the arrest and during custody, the plaintiff said that Camacho and the officers “knew or recklessly disregarded the fact that he [Parks] is emotionally disabled.” The plaintiff said the arresting officers failed to search for a concealed weapon from Parks and failed to read him

his rights during the arrest. At the same time, Department of Correction officers allegedly also failed to do a body search on the suspect. The plaintiff said that Parks turned out to have a box-cutter razor knife in his front carrier-belt pouch, which he used to slash himself while under policy custody. The plaintiff said Park did it when he began to experience severe stress at the detention cell.

Park is said to have a history of hurting himself. In the last 13 years, the plaintiff said that Park had cut himself so badly that he required the intervention of DPS. The plaintiff said that Camacho’s group failure to follow proper police procedures was a deliberate indifference to Park’s safety and health and was discriminatory. Banes noted that the police are required to protect defen-

dants from harm, including self-inflicted harm. Park has reportedly been released and no formal charges were ever brought against him. The plaintiff also noted that after waiting for five months after his arrest, no officers have been reprimanded. Such failure, according to Banes, “is outrageous, shocks the conscience, and is unconscionable, entitling plaintiff for punitive damages.

HJHS BULLETIN BOARD

May 21	Friday	Spring Musical STOMP Performance at the Hafa Adai Hotel, 6pm
May 22	Saturday	8th Grade Awards Ceremony at the Multi-Purpose Center, 9am
May 27	Thursday	Last PTA meeting, 6pm. Presentation of the school year in review
	Saturday	Promotion Mass at Mt. Carmel Cathedral, 9am Promotion Ceremony MHS Gym 3pm
May 28	Friday	Last day of school. Report cards go home with students.
June 1-4	Monday	Schedule a parental conference if you would like one.
June 2	Wednesday	Mandatory parent meeting for all summer school students in Building S at NMC, 5:30pm. All applications must be completed by June 4th for students to attend.
June 7	Monday	Summer school begins. Program will run M-F 8:30-11:30am with meals (for those eligible) and transportation provided. Program ends July 16.
Letters will go out to all students who will be receiving awards at the Awards Ceremony. Graduation apparel is island style. Please dress conservatively. School dress code applies.		
Special Summer Program. The Hopwood Library will be open weekdays this summer, starting June 9 and continuing through July 17, from 8:30-11:30am, with supervision being limited to those students actually in the library. This program is available to entering and continuing Hopwood students.		

PIA clarifies report on Flight 3805

Pacific Islands Aviation clarified yesterday that one of its plane was forced to return to Saipan Friday morning because a safety-monitoring device that is associated with the landing gear was not functioning properly. The PIA statement clarified that there is no truth to a report that came out that its Flight #3805 was diverted from its normal routing and flown to Saipan due to a faulty landing gear. “A review of events confirms that at no time during the flight was there risk to passenger safety. Second, contrary to erroneous, carelessly written reports quoting CPA managing director Carlos Salas that have appeared in some media, the aircraft’s landing gear in question was fully operational at all times, as the routine landing on Saipan

attests,” the statement said. It said that the flight crew observed a safety-monitoring device that is associated with the landing gear was not functioning properly. “The crew performed the checklist mandated by Federal Aviation Administration procedures for such occurrences. As a precaution the flight returned to Saipan. The Crash Fire and Rescue team was notified and stood by during the uneventful landing. Upon inspection a broken wire was found to have caused the problem. The plane was returned to service the same afternoon.” The company said it wishes to point out and make clear that the plane was diverted from Rota back to Saipan due of an improperly operating

safety monitoring device. “All required emergency procedures, including notification of the Saipan tower, were appropriately followed. The plane landed on Saipan without incident.” PIA operates Shorts SD-360 aircraft manufactured in accordance with 14 CFR Part 25, “Transport Category” aircraft, and as such has an ongoing working relationship with the FAA and the manufacturer to detect and identify potential opportunities that improve the aircraft operational systems and safety. For accurate and complete information concerning Pacific Island Aviation’s flight operations, the public is urged to contact the airline’s Director of Safety, Jim Stowell at (670) 234-3679.

TONY ROMAS

PEPSI

COMMUNITY *Briefs*

FREEDOM AIR FLIGHT SCHEDULE				
Flight	Day	Departure	Arrival	Frequency
New York				
FR100	Tue	7:00am	9:00am	Daily
Los Angeles				
FR101	Wed	8:00am	9:00am	Daily
New York				
FR102	Thu	9:00am	10:00am	Daily
Los Angeles				
FR103	Fri	10:00am	11:00am	Daily
New York				
FR104	Sat	11:00am	12:00pm	Daily
Los Angeles				
FR105	Sun	12:00pm	1:00pm	Daily
New York				
FR106	Mon	1:00pm	2:00pm	Daily
Los Angeles				
FR107	Tue	2:00pm	3:00pm	Daily
New York				
FR108	Wed	3:00pm	4:00pm	Daily
Los Angeles				
FR109	Thu	4:00pm	5:00pm	Daily
New York				
FR110	Fri	5:00pm	6:00pm	Daily
Los Angeles				
FR111	Sat	6:00pm	7:00pm	Daily
New York				
FR112	Sun	7:00pm	8:00pm	Daily
Los Angeles				
FR113	Mon	8:00pm	9:00pm	Daily
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FR114	Tue	9:00pm	10:00pm	Daily
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FR115	Wed	10:00pm	11:00pm	Daily
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FR116	Thu	11:00pm	12:00am	Daily
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FR117	Fri	12:00am	1:00am	Daily
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FR118	Sat	1:00am	2:00am	Daily
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FR119	Sun	2:00am	3:00am	Daily
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FR120	Mon	3:00am	4:00am	Daily
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FR121	Tue	4:00am	5:00am	Daily
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FR122	Wed	5:00am	6:00am	Daily
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FR127	Mon	10:00am	11:00am	Daily
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FR128	Tue	11:00am	12:00pm	Daily
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FR196	Sun	7:00am	8:00am	Daily
Los Angeles				
FR197	Mon	8:00am	9:00am	Daily
New York				
FR198	Tue	9:00am	10:00am	Daily
Los Angeles				
FR199	Wed	10:00am	11:00am	Daily
New York				
FR200	Thu	11:00am	12:00pm	Daily
Los Angeles				

Tropical storm 06w...centered 300 miles southeast of Yap near 7n141e...is moving northwest at 11 mph with maximum sustained winds of 40 mph. Scattered showers and isolated thunderstorms extend across Yap State between 1n and 12n from 138e to 146e. See joint typhoon warning center bulletin wtpn33 PGTW for further details. Scattered showers and isolated thunderstorms associated with Super Typhoon Nida near the Philippines extend eastward to 136e between 8n and 17n. Divergent upper-level flow north of the Marshall Islands is producing scattered showers near Kwajalein between 8n and 10n from 166e to 168e and between 13n and 18n east of 177e. Scattered showers are also occurring southwest of Kosrae from 159e to 162e south of 3n.



Winds: East at 15-20 mph. Highs near 86. Lows near 77.



Mostly cloudy with isolated showers.
Winds: Northeast at 10-15 mph. Highs near 84.
Lows near 76.



Winds: Northeast at 20 kt.



Partly cloudy with isolated showers.
Winds: East at 10 kt.



Numerous showers. Some locally heavy and isolated thunderstorms.
Winds: East at 15 kt.






















Partly cloudy with isolated showers.
Winds: East at 10 kt.



Partly cloudy with isolated showers.
Winds: East at 10 kt.



Partly cloudy with isolated showers.
Winds: East at 10 kt.

CITY	FORECAST	HIGH	LOW
 Auckland	Partly Cloudy	58F (14C)	46F (8C)
 Beijing	Showers	70F (21C)	53F (12C)
 Hong Kong	Showers	81F (27C)	75F (24C)
 Honolulu	Partly Cloudy	85F (29C)	73F (23C)
 London, England	Partly Cloudy	71F (22C)	55F (13C)
 Los Angeles	Partly Cloudy	71F (22C)	57F (14C)
 Manila	Thunder	89F (32C)	72F (22C)
 Melbourne	Partly Cloudy	62F (17C)	47F (8C)
 Miami	Showers	85F (29C)	74F (23C)
 New York City	Thunder	81F (27C)	64F (18C)
 Osaka	Rain	70F (21C)	55F (13C)
 Paris	Sunny	74F (23C)	58F (14C)
 Pusan	Partly Cloudy	70F (21C)	56F (13C)
 Rome	Sunny	66F (19C)	47F (8C)
 Salem, Oregon	Showers	70F (21C)	48F (9C)
 San Francisco	Partly Cloudy	64F (18C)	50F (10C)
 Seoul	Partly Cloudy	67F (19C)	49F (9C)
 Tokyo, Japan	Rain	80F (27C)	65F (18C)
 Washington, DC	Thunder	84F (29C)	66F (19C)

Young authors write over 1,000 books

Students at the William S. Reyes Elementary showcased their writing skills last Friday as the school held its annual Young Authors Book Fair.

According to school principal Alfred Ada, about 1,241 books were written by students from kindergarten to sixth grade.

“We want our kids to be proficient and literate, and that’s our main goal,” he said. “The fair illustrates the students’ skills and ability to write and it builds their self esteem. The kids are always enthusiastic about showing off their work to their parents.”

The students began working

on their books at the beginning of the school year, learning about writing and editing their work as the year went by. Ada said each student wrote about three to four books.

Sixth grade student Ian Benavente said he enjoys the fair because it makes him feel like a real author.

“This is really fun. We have a lot of creative books and its fun to read other students’ books. I also like it that other students are reading my books. It makes me feel like a good writer,” he said.

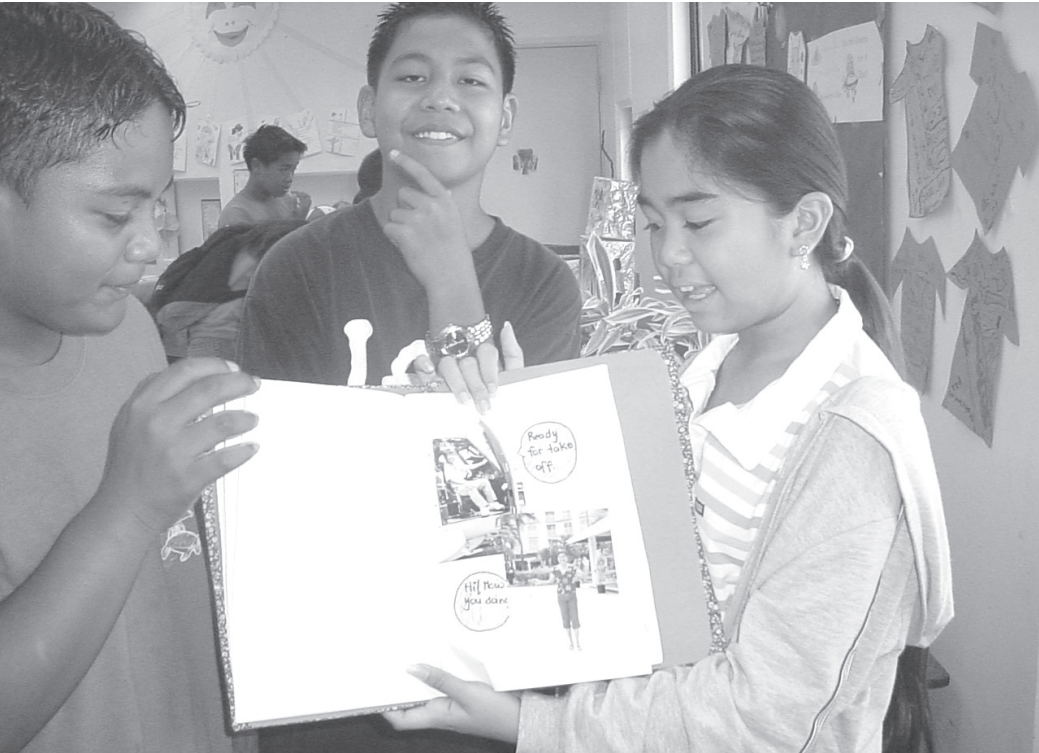
Vice principal Lynette Vilagomez said the fair served as

an opportunity for the students to express themselves.

“They get to show their feelings and express them through different genres, whether it be poetry, autobiographies, writing fiction or non-fiction stories,” she said. “They share how they feel about life, themselves, and the world, so its very exciting.”

The fair was organized by the first grade teachers. Ada also commended them for their effort in “putting on a good fair.”

“These teachers have gone above and beyond their call to have this beautiful fair,” he said. *(Shan Seman)*



Khay-Dee Sampang, a sixth grade student at the William S. Reyes Elementary School, was excited during the annual Young Authors Book Fair as she shows off one of her books to friends and classmates.

Martin Luther King bill disapproved

By EDITH G. ALEJANDRO
REPORTER

Acting Gov. Diego T. Benavente opposed the elimination of President’s Day from the CNMI’s official holidays, citing the presidents’ profound contributions to American democracy. Because of this, the administration vetoed the proposed measure that would have replaced President’s Day in the CNMI with Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

Instead, Benavente urged the 14th Legislature to preserve the President’s Day and establish the Martin Luther King’s Day by adopting a substitute legislation submitted by the Office of the Governor.

In his transmittal letter to Senate President Joaquin Adriano and House Speaker Benigno R. Fitial, Benavente said he fully support the establishment of the Martin Luther King Day as an official holiday in the CNMI. He said King was a champion of equality and civil rights for all Americans, regardless of race, creed and national origin.

“Dr. King’s efforts continue to have profound effect on civil liberties in the United States and the residents of the CNMI are direct beneficiaries of his legacy,” said the acting governor.

However, Benavente added, President’s Day honors two very significant actions in American history: Pres. George Washington, who is the founder of the republic, and Pres. Abraham Lincoln, the preserver of the Union.

“In honoring them, the nation is yearly rededicated to the most profound principles of American democracy: freedom from oppression and equality for all. We, as the newest member of the American political family, must do no less. I, therefore, believe that preserving President’s Day as a Commonwealth official holiday is important and must be maintained,” said the acting governor.

Also, Benavente urged the Legislature to introduce and adopt the proposed substitute legislation to achieve the establishment of Martin Luther King’s Day and the preservation of the President’s Day.

By doing this, the other holiday, Christopher Columbus Day, originally included along with the President’s Day in the proposed Senate Bill 14-10, would be eliminated from the official CNMI holidays.

Senate Bill 14-10, which amends the existing legal holidays in the Commonwealth, was supposed to abolish both the U.S. President’s Day and the Christopher Columbus Day, to be replaced by Martin Luther King Day and Cultural Day.

President’s Day falls on the third Monday in February. Under the measure, this will become Martin Luther King Day. Columbus Day, which falls on the second Monday of October, will be replaced by Cultural Day, which would now fall on the last Monday of May.

At present, there are 14 Commonwealth legal holidays: New Year’s Day, Commonwealth Day, President’s Day, Covenant Day, Good Friday, Memorial Day, Independence/Liberation Day, Labor Day, Columbus Day, Citizenship Day, Veterans Day, Thanksgiving Day, Constitution Day, and Christmas Day.

SIS presents original world premiere of ‘Survivor Island’

The Saipan International School is proud to announce that this year’s SIS Spring Musical production of the original world premiere of “Survivor Island” will be held tomorrow, May 19, at the Dai-Ichi Hotel’s Hibiscus Hall.

The curtain will rise at 7pm. Admission is free and the public is invited to attend.

“Survivor Island’ is an original production

and will feature a cast of over 100. Members of the faculty, staff, and students from many grade levels are busy with rehearsals, costume design, story writing, prop construction, and technical work. So, this is truly an all-school effort,” the school said in a statement.

“This is going to be a wonderful event and we are all looking forward to see you there,” it added.

CARS UNLIMITED

PSS

Opinion

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EDITORIAL

Discounting drugs

Since Monday, seniors without other prescription drug coverage have been able to purchase Medicare drug discount cards. According to government estimates, the cards could save seniors as much as 25 percent of their prescription drug costs. According to a Harvard study, the cards will save seniors, on average, 17.4 percent of their drug costs. According to House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., "some seniors will be able to save on their medications when they use the cards. But many will not."

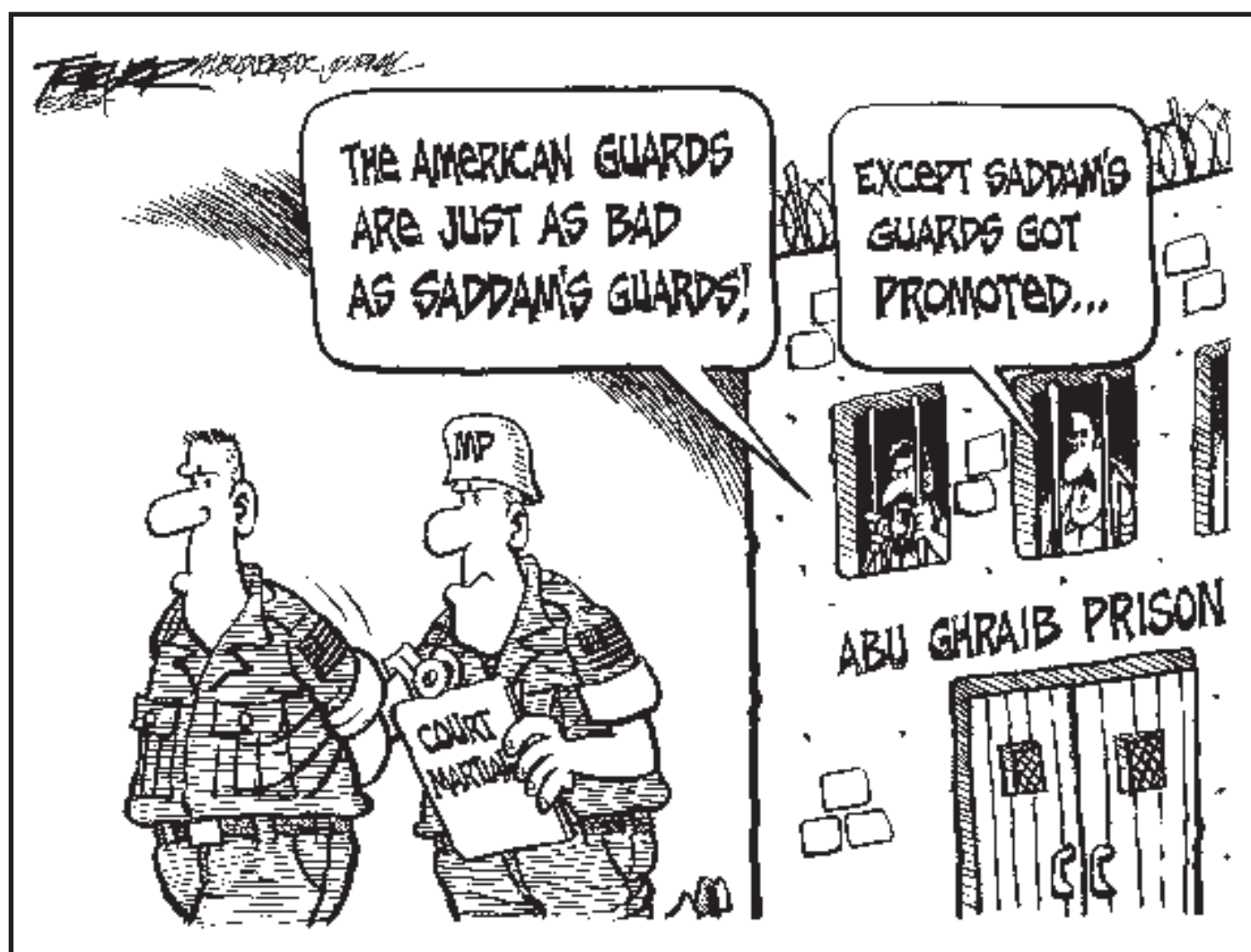
There is a reason these estimates vary: The cards are not being issued by the government but rather by more than 70 companies, including pharmacies, pharmacy benefit managers and insurance companies. The issuers are negotiating and setting the prices, and, by doing so, they are creating a market that does not yet exist—largely due to a lack of information—and whose behavior cannot be predicted. Once the program is fully up and running, it will, theoretically, be possible for seniors to shop around and compare the prices offered by various discount cards, not only to one another, but to Internet prescription drug companies, which seem to be offering prices lower than most of the discount cards. Tommy Thompson, secretary of health and human services, predicts that the higher quality of information will force prices down as companies compete with one another for seniors' business.

But nobody knows how or whether a market will work for drugs. The sheer quantity of information may drown seniors unused to choosing from dozens of plans. Medicare has set up a hotline, 1-800-Medicare, and a Web site to help seniors pick plans, but how well will an aging and disabled population be able to use them? Once seniors have chosen a plan, they have to stick with it—even if the prices change—at least until November. Will the companies selling the drug cards really compete to push prices down permanently, as Thompson predicts?

The answers to these questions matter, not so much because of the 25 percent or 17.4 percent that seniors might or might not save on their drugs over the next year and a half, but because many of these issues will arise again, on Jan. 1, 2006, when the prescription drug benefit itself finally kicks in. At that time, seniors will be asked to choose not just discount cards, but entire drug plans, also on a competitive basis, also weighing vast amounts of information. If Thompson is wrong, and the discount card program produces confusion, or fraud, or rising prices, then Congress and the country should seriously consider whether to go through with the drug benefit plan at all.

Politicians and seniors alike should monitor this smaller program to see whether it is really possible to inject competition into the strange prescription drug market. If it isn't, they should be prepared to say so.

(c) 2004, The Washington Post



Prison abuse is not really 'un-American'

By ROBERT L. BASTIAN JR.

Special to the Los Angeles Times

“That’s not the way we do things in America,” he added.

In terms of aspirations, Bush is certainly correct: Americans generally do not regard themselves as arrogant, abusive, violent, mean, petty and ignoble. As a matter of empirical, verifiable fact, however, the best social-scientific evidence suggests that the president is simply wrong on both counts.

In 1971, for example, Stanford psychology professor Philip G. Zimbardo initiated an experiment in which participating Stanford students were designated either as prisoners or guards, with guards told to maintain order. After only a few days, the project had to be terminated prematurely because the guards were, with no apparent motivation other than fulfilling their roles, becoming uncomfortably abusive toward the prisoners. What does that say about our “nature”?

In another famous experiment, Yale psychology professor Stanley Milgram told subjects to give electric shocks to a victim in a learning experiment. As the victim—an actor in another room who was not actually being shocked—gave incorrect answers, the participants were asked to turn the voltage up, even to where the dial read “danger,” a point at which the victim could be heard screaming. Although often reluctant, two-thirds of the subjects continued to follow orders to administer shocks.

Given that, what’s so surprising about the fact that in 2004, reservists controlling the relevant tier in Abu Ghraib prison would—in an effort to follow orders—agree to “soften” the Iraqi detainees for questioning?

If the president was wrong about the nature of the American people, he was no less wrong about the way things are done by Americans.

At the outset of the occupation, it was earnestly argued that the Iraqi people would welcome and benefit from imposition of U.S.-style democracy and freedoms. The American public—and, I suspect, most of the world—believed that Americans could do a better job of running a prison such as Abu Ghraib. We’re not arbitrary, abusive, unaccountable or unjust, right? Indeed, last June, Brig. Gen. Janis Karpinski told a reporter that Americans were making living conditions so much better at Abu Ghraib that she was concerned prisoners “wouldn’t want to leave.”

But again, we are deluding ourselves. The hard fact is that the United States did install in Iraq an American-style approach to prison management. Like the U.S. prison system, it is underfunded and inadequately supervised, lacks civilian oversight and accountability and is secretive and tolerant of inmate abuse until evidence of mistreatment is pushed into the public light. That, regrettably, is the American model.

Over the past four decades, political leaders here at home have committed themselves to incarcerating inmates at rates that ultimately rivaled the former Soviet Union and repressive Middle Eastern regimes. Prisons have grown overcrowded and understaffed.

At the same time, there has been no commensurate commitment to protecting prisoner rights or upholding even minimal standards. Both state and federal legislatures, with the complicity of federal courts, have continually trimmed avenues of legal redress for inmates subject to abuse.

For its part, the public was fed the myth that prisoners were coddled, and citizens accepted on faith that inmates were treated fairly. The public faith was interrupted only when graphic images materialized as evidence or by guards “rolling over.”

Regarding Abu Ghraib, testimonial evidence of abuse was reported by no fewer than a half-dozen organizations, including Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International. Until photos were shown on “60 Minutes II,” though, they were merely allegations and, therefore, not the subject of public concern and remedial action.

So, what has been shown in Abu Ghraib that has not already been seen in the United States? Recently, images of cages in which California Youth Authority wards were locked up for as much as 23 hours a day were broadcast. In 2001, Human Rights Watch reported in detail how extensively rape is tolerated in U.S. prisons.

The Eddie Dillard case, in which I represented the inmate, revealed a paper trail with respect to one prolific cell rapist responsible for more than 30 reported incidents of attempted or completed sexual assaults at six different California prisons. Still, the predator was assigned more cellmates.

The accumulated result: A federal district court judge in Northern California has threatened to take over the California Department of Corrections because it can’t break the code of silence among its guards and take responsibility for the integrity of its mission.

In the past decade, the department has restricted visits by family and journalists to the remote locations where prisons have been scattered, on the ground that the media might glamorize prison life. Or has it acted to impede reporting of underfunding and abuse?

In the shadow of the infamous Abu Ghraib photographs, it’s easy to understand why much of the world looks upon Americans as craven and arrogant. In so many ways, the United States’ interests and international image have been harmed as we act on our aspirations and self-congratulatory beliefs instead of a cold, hard view of reality, including our own limitations.

No less a figure than Winston Churchill famously said that “treatment of crime and criminals is one of the most unfailing tests of civilization of any country.” If Churchill was right, so, at the moment, are America’s critics.

Bastian is a Los Angeles lawyer.

By **JAMES KLURFELD**

2004, Newsday

Klurfeld is a columnist and editor at Newsday.

Self-blame should not pervade US

As bad as the Iraq detainee scandal is—and it is very bad—this is not the time for Americans to blame all our failings in the Mideast on ourselves.

There is an unfortunate tendency to conclude that the United States is hated in the Mideast because of our own misdeeds. That just isn't the case, and the situation just isn't that simple.

Certainly, episodes such as Abu Ghraib contribute to negative feelings about America. So does the fact that the United States is an invading power. No matter how benevolent the occupation—and obviously it hasn't been that benevolent—the occupier is still going to be resented no matter how pure the nation believes its motives to be.

But the answer to the question of “why do they hate us” has a lot more to do with traditional forms of prejudice and discrimination. The Muslim world, unable to cope with modernity and often ruled by corrupt despots, has found a convenient scapegoat for all its fears and failures: the United States of America, the most powerful nation in the world. In the 19th century, Great Britain, then the dominant world power, was placed in that role. Now it's our turn.

“Arab and Muslim hatred of the United States is not just, or even mainly, a response to actual U.S. policies—policies that, if anything, have been remarkably pro-Arab and pro-Muslim over the years,” wrote Mideast expert Barry Rubin in the November/December issue of *Foreign Affairs* of 2002. “Rather such animus is largely the product of self-interested manipulation by various groups within Arab society, groups that use anti-Americanism as a foil to distract public attention from other, far more serious problems within those societies.”

It's an article worth coming back to in the wake of the Abu Ghraib prison scandal—not to exonerate those who have done terrible, wrong things, but to place in perspective why the United States is in Iraq, what has gone wrong, and who is to blame.

Scapegoating is not a new phenomenon, of course. It is what the Nazis did to the Jews and Southern whites did to blacks. That it is the less powerful doing it to the more powerful in this case does not negate or excuse the action.

Rubin documents the positive things the United States has done for the Arab and Muslim world, including acting to protect the Bosnian Muslims and Kosovars, a Muslim group. Washington also went to war to drive the Iraqis out of Kuwait and has been steadfast in its support of Saudi Arabia, even when the Saudis were nationalizing the oil companies there.

Was there a large dose of American self-interest involved in these actions? Of course. That is the way nations act, that is the way of the world. But, then again, the 1992 U.S. intervention in the Somalia civil war had much more to do with protecting a starving Muslim population than any geopolitical calculation.

What can we do about this scapegoating of the United States? Some of it comes with the territory of being the world's only superpower. And being “liked” shouldn't necessarily be the end-all of our foreign policy. Being respected is more important. That's why I doubt that President Bush's apology about the Abu Ghraib situation will do anything to ameliorate anti-U.S. feelings.

In the end, what will work will be whether Arab states can develop their own open, free and market-oriented societies. In that sense, Bush is right to make democracy a goal for the Mideast. But if there is one thing we can see from our year in Iraq it is that you cannot impose democracy from the top down; you cannot want it more than the people and their leaders.

In the meantime, we should deal with our own shortcomings, but understand that we are not the core of the problem.

The effects of global graying

Turn on your TV these days and you're bound to see images of Iraqi youths dancing atop burned out Humvees or of Mexican youths slipping across border fences. We see Liberian child soldiers brandishing rifles and Palestinian kids throwing stones. No wonder so many Americans form the impression that Third World population growth is a major threat to global stability.

Yet these images only capture the surface of life and miss a deeper demographic reality. Nearly everyone knows that the United States and other industrialized countries are all aging societies. Europe already has more elders than youths, and by mid-century all of the United States will be older than Florida is today. Yet the most rapidly aging areas of the world, according to the United Nations, the U.S. Census and virtually all other demographic forecasters, are the very places we today associate with destabilizing youth bulges—with the Middle East being among the most rapidly aging of all.

Iran, for example, is aging four times faster than the United States. It took 50 years for the United States to go from a median age of 30 to today's 35. It would take another 50 years for the median age here to reach 40. But while the median age in the United States will be increasing by just five years, the median age in Iran will be increasing by 20 years, reaching 40.2 by mid-century, according to U.N. projections. Similarly, Egypt is aging at three times the rate of the United States, and Iraq nearly 2 1/2 times faster. Virtually anywhere one looks in the developing world, the pattern is the same.

Between 2000 and 2050, Mexico's median age will increase 20 years, leaving half the population over age 42 and making the country older than its northern neighbor. On current trends, 30 percent of China's population will be over 60 by mid-century. Even Africa is aging at nearly double the rate of the United States. Countries such as France and Japan at least got a chance to grow rich before they grew old. Now, most developing countries are growing old before they get rich.

Why is this happening?

Primarily it's because of the dramatic decline in fertility rates that is now spreading to every corner of the globe. As more of the world's population moves to urban areas in which children offer little or no economic reward to their parents, and as women gain in economic opportunity and reproductive control, people are producing fewer children.

No industrialized country still produces enough children to sustain its population. And even in countries where fertility rates are still above replacement levels, a dramatic fall in the number of children born to each woman is leading to a steep slowdown in population growth, as well as to unprecedented rates of population aging.

The global fall in fertility certainly brings a number of benefits.

By **PHILLIP LONGMAN**

Special to The Baltimore Sun



Longman is a Bernard L. Schwartz senior fellow at the New America Foundation, and the author of “The Empty Cradle” (Perseus, March 2004).

For example, as the relative number of children declines, so does the burden of their dependency, which partly explains the current economic success of countries such as India and China.

Looking to the next decade, the “middle aging” of the Middle East will ease the region's overall dependency ratio, thereby freeing more resources for infrastructure and industrial development. The appeal of radicalism may also diminish as Middle Eastern societies become increasingly dominated by middle-aged people concerned with such practical issues as health care and retirement savings.

Just as population aging in the West during the 1980s was accompanied by the disappearance of youthful indigenous terrorist groups such as the Red Brigades or the Weather Underground, falling birth rates in the Middle East could well produce societies far less prone to violence.

Yet even if declining fertility rates initially bring a “demographic dividend,” that dividend eventually has to be repaid if the trend continues. At first there are fewer children to feed, clothe and educate, leaving more for adults to enjoy. But soon enough, there are fewer productive workers as well, while there are also more and more dependent elderly, who each consume far more resources than do children. China, whose pension system is already deeply in debt, will become what demographer Xiaochun Qiao calls a “4-2-1” society, in which one child must support two parents and four grandparents.

In the longer run, of course, falling fertility leads not only to population aging, but to population decline. World population could well be shrinking before today's children reach retirement age, and there is an 85 percent chance it will be doing so by the end of the century, according to projections by International Institute for Applied Systems.

If global fertility rates converge with those seen today in Europe or among native-born Americans, by 2200 world population could shrink to half of what it is today even without any major wars or pandemics, according to U.N. projections. The only precedent we have for such a decline in population is the period of late antiquity, when falling birthrates helped bring about the collapse of the Roman Empire.

Global aging is better than its alternative, but to borrow a phrase from my late grandmother, it's not for sissies.

Voting rights for non-citizens?

Pro-immigrant activists in New York City, California, Washington, D.C., and in several smaller towns in the Northeast are pushing to let noncitizens vote in local elections. They cite precedent. Noncitizens vote in a handful of towns in Maryland. And up until the 1920s, noncitizens could vote in more than 20 states.

Nonsense. Only people who make the commitment to become U.S. citizens should have the right to vote in this country.

Some advocates look at it as a kind of training, “an ideal way to prepare them for the responsibilities of citizenship,” as Ron Hayduk and Michele Wucker argued in the *New York Daily News*. It's an empty argument. Nobody needs practice voting. Immigrants can follow the issues, and when they become citizens they can go out and vote. It's that easy.

Others take more extreme positions: If noncitizens don't get the vote, claims a study issued last year by the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center, “we will be witnessing the transformation of our cherished democratic institutions into a de facto political apartheid.”

Apartheid? This kind of idiocy gives fresh ammunition to extremists on the right who seek to paint all Hispanics as radical left-wing rabble-rousers.

I never imagined I would ever quote Mark Krikorian, head of the immigration-restrictionist Center for Immigration Studies. Yet I quote him here to show how right he is about this one issue: “Our political institutions ... ought to be reserved for the American people -- citizens either by birth or by choice, joined in the common goal of forming a more perfect union,” Krikorian wrote recently. “Citizenship is not barred to anyone for reasons of race, religion or national origin.”

Fortunately, it's not only anti-immigrant types who oppose giv-

By **ROGER E. HERNANDEZ**

King Features



Cuban-born Roger Hernandez is a syndicated columnist and writer-in-residence at New Jersey Institute of Technology.

ing noncitizens the vote. Last month New York Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg came out against it, too. And the liberal editorial page of *The New York Times* argued, “Extending the most important benefits of citizenship to those who still hold their first allegiance to another country seems counterproductive.”

Some of those who favor granting noncitizens the right to vote have one defensible point, however. Although the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services claims it is “continuing to modernize and improve the naturalization process and would like to decrease the time it takes to an average of 6 months,” the actual wait is anywhere from two to 10 years, depending on the local office.

Two years of waiting is barely acceptable, and a full decade, on top of the minimum five years of legal residence required before someone can even become a citizen, is absurd.

One way to get around this abuse of patience: Let noncitizens vote in local elections—and local elections only—if they can show they applied for citizenship two years earlier but are still caught in red tape. That shows they have made the commitment to this nation even if they are not yet citizens—through no fault of their own.

DPS honors past, present law enforcers

By SHAN SEMAN
REPORTER

As part of National Police Week, the Department of Public Safety paid homage to officers who lost their lives or where severely injured while serving in the line of duty, as well as officers who are currently serving the community.

In a Peace Officers Candle Light Vigil and Peace Officers Memorial Service held Friday, community leaders and supporters joined DPS employees and families of fallen and injured officers in the memorial service at the Fallen Officers Monument at the DPS

headquarters' parking lot in Susupe.

Led by commissioner Edward Camacho, everyone reflected on the officers' commitment to provide and promote safety in the CNMI, as well as the support and understanding they get from their families.

"[Because] of the nature of our profession, our family members suffer from worry [and] wonder, if we are OK or not, especially when they hear the sirens from a distance," the commissioner said. "[Because] of the nature of our jobs, I know that you as officers also suffer lots of sacrifices. I beg all of you to spend more time with your

loved ones...because life is short. Our officers who have gone on...bless their souls and bless their families who are now left behind to endure all the pain."

The ceremony also featured presentations of resolutions commending the department and its employees for their service.

A presentation of a wreath, flowers, and candles, as well as a 21-gun salute, was also dedicated to the fallen and injured officers. The candles, flowers, and wreath were placed in front of the monument.

The ceremony also included a Roll Call of Heroes, where all officers who served between 1945 and the

present were recognized.

The commissioner also recognized several officers who were promoted to higher ranks.

On Thursday, the DPS led supporters from the community and families of the fallen and injured officers in a vigil that featured a march beginning at the Mount Carmel Cathedral and ending at the Fallen Officers Monument.

Like the memorial service, everyone in attendance paid tribute to the fallen and injured officers.

Blue lights of police vehicles were turned on followed by sirens in honor of the officers.

Officers killed in the line of duty were Capt. Justino T. Arriola, Police Officer III Abraham S. Quitugua, and Police Officer II Gilbert M. Taisacan.

Officers injured were Officer Marvin S. Camacho, Sgt. Antonio S. Borja, and Officer Jose B. Cepeda.

The event was also dedicated to former officer I-Chih Eddie L. Chen, who served the CNMI community from Sept. 25, 1995 to Dec. 23, 1999. Chen and seven other U.S. soldiers were killed by hostile fire in Sadr City in Baghdad last April 4 when their units were attacked with rocket-propelled grenades and small arms fire.

NMIRF

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the program.

"The contract expires July 31 and no transition plan is in place. We don't want to jeopardize the program and the subscribers. The subscribers are our biggest concern. The board is looking at the option, probably extending the contract up to December this year," he said.

He acknowledged that the transition work has not been easy as expected. "So we are very, very mindful of it. It has to be done right."

The Fund, he said, simply has no time to put everything in order before July 31, considering that it still seeking out proposals to put out a program criteria.

Further, Reyes said that the Fund has to settle important issues such as the inclusion of retirees in the program.

"We want retirees to be part of the package. We can't leave them behind. So how would new carriers respond to such big and pre-existing conditions? We have to look at it carefully again because of its great its impact on the premium," he said.

He said the Fund is concerned about its negotiation with providers as to whether it could get the same or better deals than HPMR.

This came even as he noted that health insurance payments to providers are not timely.

He said the Fund wants to know whether discounts would still be available if they are owed by the Department of Public Health.

"We need to be responsible here. Although the question with HPMR has

been publicized for some time now, we should make sure the program is not leaving anyone behind."

The Saipan Tribune tried to obtain comments from HPMR's offices on Saipan but messages left with them were not returned.

Following a letter from Gov. Juan N. Babauta, the board voted last March not to renew the contract of HPMR.

Babauta, who is pushing for the privatization of the health insurance program, favors the conversion of GHLI to a private, cafeteria-style health insurance program for government employees and retirees.

If this is not possible before July 31, the governor had suggested that the board take over the management of the government health insurance program "with your in-house resources for the relatively short period until the new system is fully operational."

The governor's proposal allows subscribers to choose specific health insurance providers that they want.

This would become possible when the government solicits bids from private health insurance providers, in which a group of three or more would be selected.

This came as previous findings by the Attorney General's Office and the Office of the Public Auditor said that HPMR contract, which was signed in August 2001, did not follow the CNMI Procurement Regulations, putting into question the validity of the contract.

The Fund had also said it found that some clauses that are usually included in standard government contract forms were missing.

by early next week on a meeting date and time," said Villagomez.

In a separate interview with House spokesperson Charles Reyes, he said the meeting stemmed from numerous power outages scheduled by the CUC. Legislators, he said, want to know how stable the CNMI's power supply is.

He said these power outages might be disrupting services not only in the government sector but private businesses as well.

Also, a stable power supply is a measure used by potential investors and the lack of it would lessen possible business proposals.

Also, Reyes said the meeting might also take up the indebtedness of the CNMI government with CUC and the ongoing discussion between utility firm and the CNMI on how the problem would be resolved.

Reyes said other issues may also be tackled when the PUTC and CUC meet.



18 YEARS TOGETHER

Marianas High School MY WAVE Tourism Club members pose for the camera with visiting students from Seisa Gakuen Subaru High School of Japan during last Saturday's Cultural Day, which also marked the 18th year of tie-up between the two schools. The students planted trees to celebrate the event.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

LIBDAY

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Chuck Sayon, site manager of the American Memorial Park, said the rides offered last year were "greatly reduced" due to the inability of the organizers to comply with the insurance requirements needed to obtain a permit for them.

Sayon added that the organizers are welcome to hold the event at the park, as they have every year since he started working at the park (1996).

Construction is now underway on the concessionaire booths and improvement to the grounds for the amusement rides. In all, 32 booths are being constructed, and so far people are lining up to secure them in anticipation of a busy opening night.

Of the 32 booths, 20 are being set aside for vendors who will provide food and drink services, while the remaining 12 will be "for people to sell balloons and other sorts of things," according to Cepeda.

Apparently, there has been no problem raising interest in the reservation of the food and beverage booths, with a waiting list over and above the preset limit of 20. On the other hand, Cepeda said that they have not received as many requests for the booths set aside for "the others"

There is also a possibility that gaming could be making a comeback to the festival after a two-year absence. An old building on the property that has fallen victim to vandals over the years will be spruced up for the occasion.

"We are going to be cleaning the

place and possibly using it. We will repaint it to [remove] the graffiti," said Cepeda. "Maybe it will be used for games and activities. So far, one person is interested, but there have been no official requests."

In 2002, all gaming described as a "money for money exchange" was prohibited in the park, with only Bingo allowed as part of the Liberation Day festivities at the federal park.

Bingo was the lone form of gambling allowed on park grounds, said Sayon, because it was the only regulated gaming activity on the island that was operated as a franchise and held accountable to the CNMI.

Though many of the details are yet to be finalized, the festivities are scheduled to take place on Friday, June 4, and continue until Monday, July 5.

PUTC

From Page 1

ous scheduled power outages," the PUTC hopes to conduct the meeting at the earliest convenient time.

Villagomez also told Sablan and Babauta that appropriate senior management staff from the Power Plant Division should also attend so that the committee may be fully apprised of the situation.

According to the vice speaker, the meeting would not only dwell on the power outages but would explore other issues, including pending Capital Improvement Projects under CUC's authority.

"Come prepared to discuss pending CIP as members are concerned about the lack of progress on the construction of approved projects. The committee is looking forward to the opportunity to discuss these matters. My office would be expecting a call

HUMAN

From Page 1

"The court can't speculate on these things. There is no evidence that there was discussion [on the attempt to enter Guam], no testimony that they paid money. This defendant denied any knowledge of attempting to enter the U.S. That's the government's burden to prove otherwise... I find the defendant not guilty of this case," Munson said.

He said, though, that the accused must remain in the custody of CNMI immigration authorities for proper legal action. He noted that Cheng has no legal status to continue to stay in the Commonwealth.

During his testimony, Cheng said that he has been living in the CNMI since 1992 without a regular work.

"I work if there's work. If there's no work, I have fun. I work for anybody. I go wherever there's work," he said.

His last work prior to his arrest last month, he said, was on Tinian. When

asked who was his last employer, he said, "I can't remember the name."

With Tinian resident Eddie Fleming as boat captain, Cheng, together with three other Chinese nationals—including two women—left Tinian on April 5, 2004.

Cheng said it was a fishing trip but prosecutors said that it was a planned trip to bring them to Guam. They were arrested on Rota where they had to stop by twice due to the rough seas and lack of fuel.

The judge's decision favors the petition filed by the defendant's lawyer, former Superior Court judge Timothy Bellas.

Bellas said during yesterday's court hearing that the prosecution's assertions "are all speculations."

He reiterated the defendant's testimony that he was unaware of any discussions about going to Guam, insisting that he only wanted "to have fun" fishing.

Besides, Bellas said Cheng did not know the other passengers except one

whom he said was his acquaintance.

For his part, prosecutor Jamie Bowers said common sense would dictate that there was a conspiracy to illegally enter Guam, citing alleged admissions by other defendants that they paid money for the trip.

He said there was no need prove that the defendants made it to Guam, "but the attempt was made."

"The attempt was complete when they left Tinian," he said.

He pointed out that one of Cheng's co-accused said she knew she was going to Guam, and had contributed money for the boat's fuel.

Another local, he said, also testified that he knew the group was going to Guam.

"The evidence is very strong that they were headed to Guam," Bowers said. "It was not a fishing trip. It was a trip to smuggle people to Guam."

Meantime, two of Cheng's co-accused in the case reportedly entered a guilty plea agreement.

Local students do well in math tourney



The CNMI's mathletes pose for a souvenir shot during a tour of Washington D.C. Behind them is the White House.

Roger Lee, Soo Ji Ha, Cheol Min Shin and Bernadeth Piamonte competed in the Mathcounts National Competition on May 7, 2004, in Washington, DC.

The CNMI team coach was Ramir Trinidad from Marianas Baptist Academy.

These four students earned the right to represent the CNMI by finishing in the top four individual places at the CNMI Commonwealth Competition earlier this year.

At the National Competition, Cheol Min Shin of Marianas Baptist Academy finished the highest of all the CNMI "Mathletes" and not far behind her was

Soo Ji Ha of Saipan Community School. Lee and Piamonte rounded out the CNMI's scores with strong showings in the Sprint Round, according to a statement send to media offices.

The statement did not indicate the individual scores of the four students.

It said the CNMI mathletes were well received in Washington where they made a lot of friends and were able to test themselves against the best math students in the nation.

Mathcounts is the only national math coaching and competition for the 6th, 7th and 8th grade students and this the

10th year that the CNMI has competed in the program.

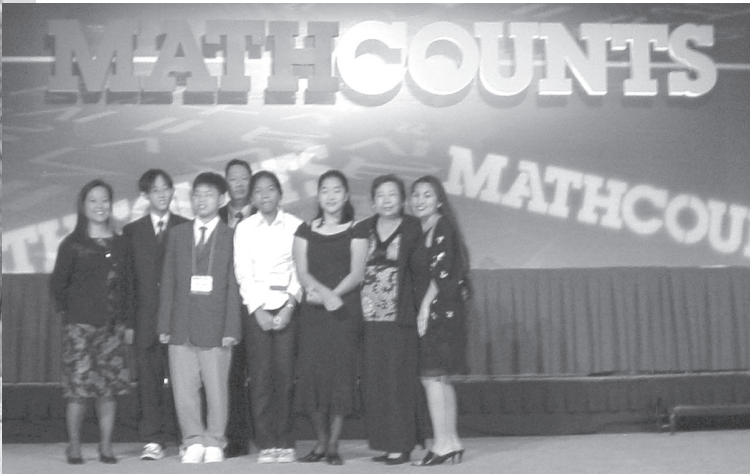
These four students were four of 228 students at the national competition from all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, U.S. Virgin Islands, the Northern Mariana Islands, and the Department of Defense and State Department schools worldwide.

More than 17,000 Mathcounts volunteers from the business and education communities annually organize and conduct the program in communities nationwide.

Locally EFC Engineers and Architects Corp. coordinate

the program. Primary sponsors for the local program include Continental Airlines, Chong's Corp., Rep. Ramon A. Tebuteb, DFS Saipan Inc., EFC Engineers & Architects Corp., Joeten Charitable Foundation, Mobil Oil Marianas Inc. and Subway Investment. Local sponsors also include Deloitte & Touche Tohmatsu, Saipan Shipping Company, Saipan Garment Manufacturing Association, and UMDAdeux.

Nationally Mathcounts is sponsored by the CNA Foundation, the National Society of Professional Engineers and the National Council of Teachers of



The CNMI team poses for a souvenir shot on stage after the Mathcounts competition.

Mathematics. National sponsors also include the General Motors Foundation, Lockheed Martin, National Aeronautics and Space Administration, Texas Instruments Inc. and 3M Foundation.

crees

voc rehab

'Taming the Shrew' goes to GIG

Mount Carmel School's Theatre Club will stage its 17th theatrical production, *Taming the Shrew*, on Friday, May 21, and Saturday, May 22, at 6pm each night at GIG Discotheque in Garapan.

The production is a punk rock musical adapted by the school's Advanced Placement English Class from William Shakespeare's comedy, *The Taming of the Shrew*. This is the club's 17th production since its inception eight years ago.

The story of *Taming the Shrew* closely follows Shakespeare's original. Several boys at Padua High School pine for Bianca, a local beauty whose father will not allow her to date unless her sister, Kate, also dates. Unfortunately for Bianca's suitors, Kate, an anti-social guitarist in a punk rock band, is opposed to dating, men, and romance. The story unfolds when Bianca's suitors plot a scheme to get Kate to date. But will the anti-dating, anti-romance Kate fall for the scheme? Or will she fall in love?

A highlight of the production will be live punk rock music played by student

musicians John Del Rosario, Sweeda Glad, Jon Igitol, Steven Johnson, Andrew Moses, and Sherman Santos. The production's emphasis on music prompted the cast and crew to perform at GIG Discotheque, which has recently built a new band stage.

The club's performance at GIG will also be the first time that a theatrical production is staged at GIG. Such an innovation echoes the Theatre Club's performance of *Grease* at the Hard Rock Café in Garapan in January 2000, which also marked the first time that a theatrical production was staged at a Hard Rock Café restaurant.

Taming the Shrew is being directed by Theatre Club veterans Karen Cabrera and Josh Gibson. The show stars other club veterans, Sweeda Glad as Kate, Deniece Santos as Bianca, and Sherman Santos as Luke, as well as club newcomer, Andrew Moses, as Peter.

Admission for *Taming the Shrew* is \$5. Tickets are available at the school Business Office. For more information on the show, call 234-6184.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Mount Carmel School's Theatre Club will stage its 17th theatrical production, *Taming the Shrew*, on Friday, May 21, and Saturday, May 22, at 6pm each night at GIG Discotheque in Garapan.



LIBERTY DONES

HONORING MIYAZAWA

Gov. Juan N. Babauta, second left, former congressman William S. Torres, left, and Saipan mayor Juan B. Tudela look on as Marianas High School principal James Denight reads a municipal proclamation in honor of Yashu Miyazawa, president and founder of Miyazawa Gakuen school, center, during a farewell ceremony Sunday evening at World Resort Hotel.

18 AND GOING STRONG

Gov. Juan N. Babauta, second right, shares a table with Yashu Miyazawa, president and founder of Miyazawa Gakuen School, third right, Saipan mayor Juan B. Tudela, right, and Marianas High School principal James Denight, left, during a farewell party for the visiting Gakuen students Sunday night at World Resort Hotel. The CNMI and Seisa Gakuen celebrate their 18th year of their sister-school relationship.

LIBERTY DONES



GOODWILL ENVOY

Former congressman William S. Torres, right, hands a 2003 House joint resolution making Yashu Miyazawa an ambassador of goodwill during a ceremony Sunday evening at World resort Hotel. Looking on are Gov. Juan N. Babauta, Saipan mayor Juan B. Tudela, and Marianas High School principal James Denight.

LIBERTY DONES



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Kagman Elementary School students perform a dance number during Cultural Day last Saturday.

KagES says thank you

The Kagman Elementary School's staff is extending their thanks to the sponsors who contributed in the success of the school's Cultural Day on Saturday, May 15, from 8:30am through 3pm.

The school's appreciation goes to the following individuals: Saipan Mayor Juan Tudela, Kenyelynn L. Arriola, Miss CNMI International; Daisy Mendiola, P.T.A. president of Kagman Elementary School; Sen. Pete Reyes; Rep. Joseph De Leon Guerrero, Kimberly Palacios and company; Doreen Tudela, principal of Kagman High School; Anthony Santos, Me'Mongs Game; Epiphany Cabrera, H.P.O.; Sebastian Camacho and company; National Office Supply; Modern Stationery; Marianas Variety; Saipan Tribune; Marianas Cable Vision; P.S.S. Media; Coca-Cola Bottling Co.; Nikko Hotel; Paradise Hotel; Pacific Islands Club; Saipan World Resort Hotel; Moda Cash 'N' Carry Store; McDonald's; Marianas Visitors Authority; Dolphins; Lollipops; Hard Rock Café; Lab Tech; Capricciosa; Bali Fashions; Best Sellers; SM Mart; "Tausala Ole Pacifica"; COJHS 7th



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Me'mong's Party Rentals provides an inflatable dragon as part of the attractions during Kagman Elementary School's Cultural Day on Saturday.

& 8th Grade Dancers; Lucky 'R' Restaurant; and Fong's Bakery

Appreciation also goes to the parents, teachers, students, administrative staff, and whoever in one way or another helped in the success of the "event-of-the-year."



Island Snapshots



PATRIOTIC SINGERS

SHAN SEMAN

Drop of Dew leads the crowd singing the CNMI National Anthem during the MMAC opening ceremony. At far right is Lt. Gov. Di-ego T. Benavente.



DELEGATE SUPPORT

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The Saipan Chamber of Commerce recently presented a resolution to Washington Rep. Pete A. Tenorio in support of a Washington delegate in the 108th United States Congress. Left to right: Michael von Siebenthal of Hyatt Regency Saipan, Lynn Knight of Tan Holdings, Jay Jones of Triple J Motors, Tenorio, Richard Pierce of SGMA, Jerry Tan of Tan Holdings, and Juan Guerrero of Juan T. Guerrero and Associates.



THE PATRIOTS

SHAN SEMAN

Department of Public Safety police officers take part in the singing of the National Anthem.



ART WORK

LIBERTY DONES

A Eucon International school student poses beside one of the artworks displayed in the school hallway.



CHILD'S PLAY

LIBERTY DONES

Eucon International School kindergarten students of Eucon international school teacher Jennifer Kuhr pose for a picture inside their classroom Friday.



TALENT WEEK

LIBERTY DONES

Lower grade students of Eucon International School display their talent in group singing during their school's Talent Week ceremony Friday.



HOPWOOD'S PRIDE

LIBERTY DONES

Hopwood Junior High School Language Arts teachers say they are very proud of their students' improved reading performance. The group, and HJHS officials presented their latest reading assessment result to parents and the public on Monday at the Multi Purpose Hall in Susupe. In photo are from right: reading resource teacher Christine Tudela, Christine Halloran, Rory Starskey, Kathrine Barja, and Darlene Pangelinan.



AIRPORT SEWERLINE

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The Saipan International Airport will now be serviced with a full sewerline system after the Commonwealth Ports Authority and the Commonwealth Utilities Corp. completed the off-airport sewerline project. Top, CUC and Pacific Drilling Ltd. officials inspect the finished project. The project consisted of installing a complete sewer system from the Saipan International Airport along Tun Herman Pan Road, downward to Shell Dan Dan Gas Station and all the way south along As Lito Road to Agingan Wastewater Treatment Plant. Other picture shows the aircraft waste disposal system that is hooked up to the newly completed sewerline system.



WINNERS TOO

SHAN SEMAN

Members of Team Ahu pose for a snap shot with MMAC chairman Ed Calvo, third from left, and vice chairwoman Reyna Hudson, fourth from left, after winning the Pulan category with \$4,364.



WINNERS ALL

SHAN SEMAN

Michael Manglona was all pumped up after his team, Department of Public Health Hinemlo, won the Atdao category after raising \$2,718 during the Marianas March Against Cancer last weekend.



TOP BARTENDERS

SHAN SEMAN

2004 Bartenders Cocktail Competition winner Michael Bederio of Saipan Grand Hotel, second from left, poses for a souvenir shot with first runner-up Roel Caruana, far right, and second runner-up Marvin Salamat, second from right, and NMI Bartenders Association president Lito Espino, far left. Bederio also won Best in Show.



SHAN SEMAN

The 10 bartenders who competed in last Saturday's event as part of the Taste of the Marianas strike a pose for photo.



HIS DOMAIN

LIBERTY DONES

Northern Island Mayor Valentin Taisakan shows an artists' rendition of Anatahan volcano in his office. The mayor recently asked the Legislature for some \$100,000 funding to finance needed field trips to the different islets in the Northern Islands.

Business

SAIPANCELL COMMUNICATIONS

Interactive showcase for new futuristic store



SAIPANCELL Communications announced today that it has created an end-to-end solution that bridges the gap between e-tail and retail. The company's new store, which opened Monday, May 17, is located next to Pizza Hut on Middle Road. The new store demonstrates the future of wireless retail through an exciting mix of interactive technology, architecture, and display fixtures.

The futuristic store architecture creates an inviting gallery-style atmosphere. A 40" interactive plasma screen and a state-of-the-art interactive column complete with four Internet-enabled stations are just two of the focal points of the new store.

The Internet-enabled stations integrated into the interactive columns allow customers to access a complete array of product information. This includes rate plans, coverage areas, wireless phones, accessories, pagers and long distance services. The stations will entertain and allow customers to have self-directed sessions to learn more about SAIPANCELL Communications.

The store also features a live phone display. This display allows customers to test each phone the company sells to help them determine the best phone for their needs. Customers can access and try out all of the features of each phone, such as ring tones, screen styles and voice quality.

"This new approach to retail shopping is a significant improve-



SHAN SEMAN

The futuristic store architecture creates an inviting gallery-style atmosphere. A 40" interactive plasma screen and a state-of-the-art interactive column complete with four Internet-enabled stations are just two of the focal points of the new store.

ment to our customer service," said Kevin Seeker, director of marketing for SAIPANCELL Communications. "The technology will provide customers with an enhanced experience that makes shopping fun and more simple than ever before."

The public will have a first-hand opportunity to experience this new shopping concept during the grand opening at SAIPANCELL's new Gualo Rai Middle Road store next to Pizza Hut.

According to Seeker, the grand opening "will be a major event complete with discounts on wireless phones, free food and refreshments, drawings for special prizes every hour, balloons for the kids, plus a special guest appearance by Cell Boy, the company's mascot."

Established in 1992 with only five employees, it is now one of the leading providers for telecommunications services. SAIPANCELL Communications is known for its global communications solution in wireless, paging and long distance.



SHAN SEMAN

The Internet-enabled stations integrated into the interactive columns allow customers to access a complete array of product information. This includes rate plans, coverage areas, wireless phones, accessories, pagers and long distance services.

Garapan Mobil station to get new look

By SHAN SEMAN
REPORTER

The Mobil gas station located on Middle Road, Garapan, will get a new look as renovations at its retail outlet, together with a Mobil Mart mini-grocery store, is expected to be completed this summer.

New owner Augustin K. Castro said during the new management grand opening last Friday afternoon that the mart will be remodeled to attract more customers.

"The idea is to attract more customers," he said. "We're going to make changes and remodeling in the mart and bring in more products."

As part of celebrations for the new management takeover, Castro said the mart will feature discounted products during the entire month.

Castro, who started work at the station as a gas attendant in the 70's, took over as its



SHAN SEMAN

Augustine K. Castro, far right, strikes a pose for a photo with fellow members of management and participants of last Friday's grand opening in the Mobil Mart on Middle Road, Garapan.

new owner on April 1 this year. His PCC Corp. has already been successful in running the Mobil station in Koblerville.

"We're grateful that Mobil gave this to us," he said. "We were first given control of the gas station in Koblerville to start off and everything went well. It's a service busi-

ness. We like to serve the community. This is a good opportunity to start," Castro said. Hopefully, we get most of the customers through better pricing."

Castro's uncle, Frank C. Castro, owned the gas station then on the space where the gas station is now. In the early

1980s, the uncle relinquished ownership of the establishment and sold it to another company.

The establishment, equipped with 10 pumps, is the biggest Mobil gas station in the CNMI and the second biggest in the entire Marianas. (Shan Seman and John Ravelo)

Internet groceries continue to expand

PHILADELPHIA (AP)—After the spectacular crashes of big-name Internet grocers in the late 1990s, the dream of a grand new wave of online food stores appeared to fizzle. But with intentionally meager fanfare, grocers have made Internet shopping available to tens of millions of consumers nation-

wide, and upcoming expansions will expand it to millions more.

Industry watchers say it's no longer a question of whether Internet grocery can be successful, but rather of how big it will become.

"Our business has doubled the last two years and we expect it to double again this

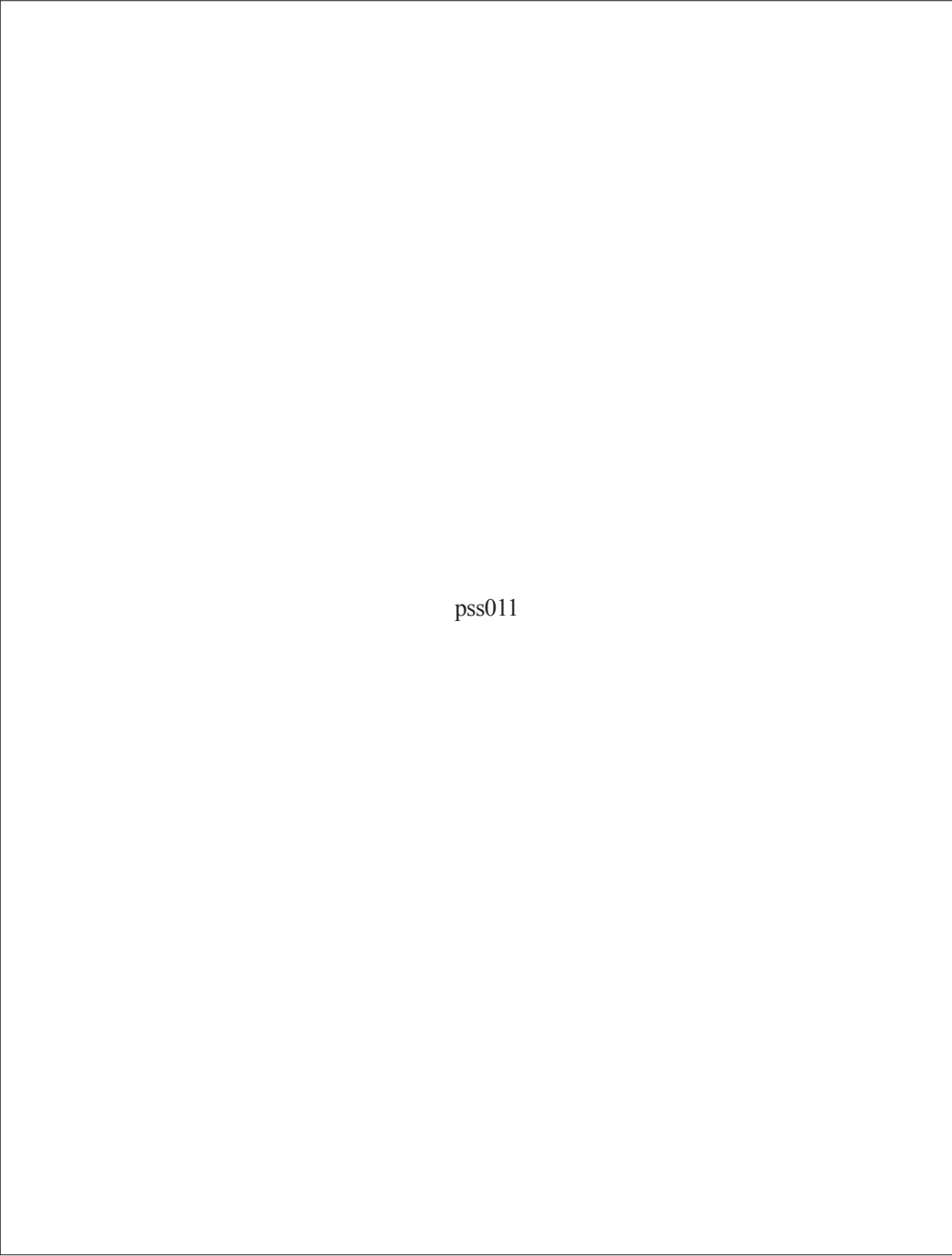
year," said Safeway.com head Mitch Rhodes, who labeled the growth "relatively explosive" for an industry with notoriously low profit margins.

Peapod LLC says it has 150,000 active customers in its delivery range, which includes Chicago and the East Coast, where it handles Internet shop-

ping for chains like Giant and Stop & Shop. By 2006, Peapod expects to nearly double its reach, to areas serving 14 million potential households.

New York-based Freshdirect.com, which opened in fall 2002, now has about 100,000 active customers, a fourfold increase from a year ago.

Nation



Asia

Arroyo widens lead in Philippines election

Typhoon strands thousands of commuters in Philippines

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—A typhoon packing winds of 170 kilometers (105 miles) per hour approached the Philippines’ east coast Monday, stranding thousands of commuters after authorities halted sea travel to prevent possible accidents, the weather bureau said.

There were no immediate reports of accidents but the coast guard said it was checking unconfirmed news reports of three missing fishermen in the central Philippines.

The Philippine weather bureau tracked Typhoon Nida’s eye at dawn Monday, 60 kilometers (40 miles) east of Catanduanes province with sustained winds of 170 kph (105 miles) and gusts of up to 205 kph (130 mph).

The typhoon was roaring toward the northwest at 19 kph (12 mph) and is expected to be 190 kilometers (120 miles) southeast of mountainous northern Cagayan province by Tuesday, forecasters said.

Nida, which is carrying a wide ribbon of rain clouds, cut short a scorching summer season.

Several provinces, including the capital, Manila, were put on typhoon alert and coast guard and disaster response units were on standby. Weather officials urged people living in flood-prone areas and near mountain slopes to take extra precaution.

Sea travel was suspended in a number of eastern provinces, stranding around 5,600 commuters and nine ferries, officials said.

Coast guard chief Vice Adm. Arturo Gosingan urged seafarers, especially fishermen, to avoid areas where sea travel has been banned temporarily.

“We appeal to fishermen to follow our advise. The waters in some areas are now too dangerous,” he said.

About 20 storms and typhoons hit the Philippines annually.

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo widened her lead Sunday over opposition front-runner Fernando Poe Jr. in an independent count of votes from last week’s national elections, but Poe’s party claimed to be gathering evidence of widespread cheating.

With ballots from nearly 25 percent of electorates tallied, Arroyo had 3.5 million votes and Poe about 2.6 million, according to the National Citizen’s Movement for Free Elections, an officially sanctioned election watchdog.

The group is carrying out its own count of the votes because the official tally is being conducted by hand and will not be complete for weeks.

The respected survey group Social Weather Stations has predicted an Arroyo victory based on exit polls.

Poe’s supporters allege widespread cheating in the May 10 elections. Poe has said he believes he won and his party has threatened huge street protests if he is robbed of victory.

Jejomar Binay, Poe’s spokesman, said party members have gathered evidence of election fraud, including testimonies

from witnesses and official records showing Poe with no votes in some areas where he was considered popular.

Binay also cited a survey by Social Weather Stations that showed up to 2.5 percent of the country’s 43 million voters were unable to cast ballots because their names did not show up on voter lists.

Presidential spokesman Ignacio Bunye denied allegations of widespread cheating.

“So far, there is nothing to show a systematic trend of fraud of a nationwide scale as to materially affect the outcome of the national elections,” he said.

Arroyo’s government has warned that attempts to hold a “people power” revolt would be met with “the full force of the law.”

The chairman of the election watchdog group, Jose Concepcion, said he had not seen evidence of cheating in the presidential election—but there was some in local elections that were also held May 10.

“I have not seen any attempt to commit massive fraud,” Concepcion told The Associated Press. “What I’ve seen very clearly is that the local elections were terrible.”

South Korea says US wants to pull troops

SEOUL, South Korea (AP)—Washington wants to move some of the 37,000 U.S. troops stationed in South Korea to Iraq, South Korean officials said Monday. “The U.S. government has told us that it needs to select some U.S. troops in South Korea and send them to Iraq to cope with the worsening situation in Iraq,” said Kim Sook, head of the South Korean Foreign Ministry’s North American Bureau.

“South Korea and the United States are discussing the matter” and working out details including the number of U.S. troops to be redeployed, Kim said.

In Washington, a senior defense official confirmed that the Pentagon is in discussions with Seoul about using some Korea-based U.S. forces in Iraq.

The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said the shift was not imminent but would be part of the next rotation of American troops in Iraq, which is scheduled to begin late this summer.

Tapping into the U.S. military force in Korea would be an historic move by the Pentagon. It underscores the degree to which the military is stretched to provide enough forces for Iraq while also meeting its other commitments. The United States has maintained troops in South Korea since the end of the Korean War in 1953.

Seoul has feared that a cut in U.S. military presence might weaken the two allies’ combined defense readiness against North Korea amid tension over the communist state’s nuclear weapons program. The inter-Korean border remains the world’s most heavily armed.

Beijing museum acquires bronze relic

BEIJING (AP)—A Beijing museum has acquired a bronze container shaped like a phoenix believed to be at least 3,000 years old, a relic from China’s Western Zhou dynasty.

The artifact was sold to the Poly Art Museum by a Hong Kong antiques dealer for an undisclosed sum, the South China Morning Post reported Saturday. It was not immediately clear where the dealer found the item, worth an estimated \$10.25 million, the Hong Kong-based newspaper said.

People from the Western Zhou dynasty (1100-771 B.C.) considered the phoenix a guardian spirit

and a symbol of prosperity.

Measuring 19 inches high and 16 inches long, the phoenix stands with its head held high, wings spread and tail sweeping gracefully. On its back is a smaller phoenix attached to the lid.

The relic was likely discovered in tombs in either northwest Shaanxi province or central Henan province, the museum said in a news release. Chinese characters engraved on the lid show that the container was made for a member of a noble family surnamed Peng, the museum said.

The container went on display Saturday.

trb grad ad

US GI dies in attack in S. Afghanistan

HOME SWEET HOME

An unidentified soldier holds his child as he returned to his base in Asahikawa, northern Japan Monday, May 17, 2004. Some 110 Ground Self-Defense Force troops served in southern Iraq returned to Japan Monday.

AP



By NOOR KHAN
AP WRITER

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan (AP)—Suspected Taliban fighters ambushed a U.S. patrol in southern Afghanistan, killing one soldier, the military said Sunday, while Afghan forces seized rebel weapons in a neighboring province.

U.S. troops defused a bomb targeting a bridge, not far from where the patrol was attacked Saturday in Helmand province, a district police chief said.

The flurry of incidents over the weekend underscored the security threats to Afghanistan as it plans to hold general elections in September, viewed as a keystone in rebuilding the nation after a quarter-century of war. The United Nations will help conduct the elections.

Some 20,000 U.S. forces, up from 11,000 a few months ago, are in Afghanistan to hunt down supporters of the former Taliban regime and their al-Qaida allies who have threatened to sabotage the polls.

Despite American assertions that the rebels are a fading force, attacks against the U.S.-backed Afghan government, aid workers and coalition forces continue in the south and east.

Lt. Col. Michele DeWerth, U.S. military spokeswoman in the capital, Kabul, said one American soldier was killed and two wounded in the attack on the patrol near Girishk in Helmand. The two wounded returned to duty after medical treatment.

DeWerth said one "anti-coalition" fighter was detained at the scene. Dad Mohammed Khan, the intelligence chief for Helmand, said that Afghan agents had arrested two suspected Taliban for the attack on Sunday.

At least 122 U.S. troops have died, including 53 killed in action, since the start of Operation Enduring Freedom in late 2001 to topple the Taliban regime for harboring al-Qaida. About one-third of the fatalities have occurred during counterterrorism operations in countries other than Afghanistan.

The last reported U.S. death was on May 7, when a Marine was killed in a nighttime attack on a patrol in southern Uruzgan province, the elite American force's first loss to hostile fire in Afghanistan.

District police chief Bier Jan said that on Saturday evening, U.S. forces alerted by the police defused a bomb planted at a bridge over a river in Girishk, which he said terrorists had wanted to blow up.

He said six suspects, whom he did not identify, had been arrested and an investigation was under way.

Meanwhile, Afghan police arrested Sunday six suspected Taliban for arms smuggling in Panjwayi district of neighboring Kandahar province. District police chief Saadullah Khan said police seized 80 AK-47 assault rifles found inside an oil tanker, which was being escorted by three cars.

He said two of the arrested men were brothers of an adviser to Taliban supreme leader Mullah Omar.

Myanmar junta to open constitutional convention despite Suu Kyi boycott

NYAUNG-HNA-PIN, Myanmar (AP)—Ignoring a boycott by pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi's party, Myanmar's military government was set Monday to open a constitutional convention that it is touting as the first step to democracy.

The National League for Democracy party was staying away from the convention to protest the government's failure to meet its condition to release Suu Kyi—the party's general secretary—as well as party Vice President Tin Oo from house arrest.

The party also set other conditions for its participation in the convention that were rejected by the junta, such as a guarantee

that the party's views are not brushed under the carpet.

The government accused the NLD of making "unreasonable demands," and said Suu Kyi, a Nobel Peace Prize laureate, and Tin Oo would remain detained "for the time being to ensure the peaceful development of the National Convention."

The standoff is a major blow to efforts toward ending the political deadlock in this Southeast Asian nation, which has been under military rule since 1962.

The current regime seized power in 1988 after crushing a pro-democracy uprising. The junta held elections in 1990 but refused to hand over power

when Suu Kyi's party won a landslide victory.

However, about 1,000 other delegates including representatives of 25 ethnic parties are attending the National Convention, which aims to draft guidelines for a new Constitution. It is not known how long the convention will last.

Ambassadors of other countries and Myanmar journalists representing local and international media were invited to attend an opening ceremony but were told not to bring cellular phones, laptop computers and other recording devices. Foreign journalists were barred from coming to the country.

Reports: Japan to give 250K tons of rice to North Korea

TOKYO (AP)—Japan will offer 250,000 tons of rice to North Korea during a summit next weekend if the countries make significant progress regarding Japanese victims of North Korean abduction, media reports said Monday.

Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi will travel to Pyongyang to meet North Korean leader Kim Jong Il on Saturday.

One of Koizumi's top priorities will be discussing Japanese kidnapped by North Korea since the 1970s, including 10 that Pyongyang says have died or gone missing. He'll also seek the release of

eight relatives of former kidnap victims. Those abductees have been allowed to return to Japan but their kin remain in North Korea.

Kim admitted in 2002 that North Korea had kidnapped over a dozen Japanese in the 1970s and 1980s to teach spies Japanese language and culture. Five of the kidnap victims returned to Japan shortly afterward.

The Asahi newspaper reported Monday Koizumi will decide whether to supply the aid after hearing what Kim has to say. The two sides are currently discussing a delivery of about 250,000 tons of rice, the Asahi said.

The Yomiuri, another major daily, had a similar report.

Japan last supplied North Korea with rice in 2000, when it sent 500,000 tons, the Asahi said.

Tokyo suspended all aid to Pyongyang in 2002 amid public anger about the abductions. It vowed not to resume its assistance until all abduction issues were resolved.

After last month's deadly train explosion, however, Japan sent North Korea medical kits and other emergency aid worth about US\$100,000. Japanese media reports said that move helped lay the ground for this weekend's meeting.

Schools reopen amid tight security in south Thailand

BANGKOK, Thailand (AP)—Hundreds of policemen and troops guarded schools in Thailand's Muslim south on the first day of a new academic year Monday, while a policeman was shot dead in the region's continuing spiral of violence, officials said.

The violence has been blamed on alleged Islamic insurgents seeking to carve out a separate homeland in the Muslim-dominated southern provinces of this predominantly Buddhist nation. The insurgents have frequently set fire to government schools in the past.

Sgt. Madusen Choomsalae, a Muslim officer, was shot while riding a motorcycle back home after attending morning prayers at a mosque in Pattani town, police Lt. Tanya Choonui said. He was shot by a gunman traveling on the backseat of a motorcycle, Tanya said.

In separate incident, retired police Sgt. Mahama Manor was

shot and injured while riding a motorcycle, also by motorcycle-borne gunmen, in Narathiwat province, police said.

The incidents occurred as the regional army commander, Gen. Pisarn Wattanawongkhiri, inspected hundreds of troops providing security for schools that reopened after a two-month summer holiday.

A total of 214 schools in remote areas of Narathiwat, Pattani and Yala provinces are being guarded by two policemen and two soldiers each to prevent attacks by insurgents. The three provinces are the only Muslim-majority parts of the country.

The separatist insurgency is believed to have been spawned by decades of complaints by the Muslims over unfair treatment in jobs and education by the predominantly Buddhist government.

They also are upset that the central government imposes the

Thai language in schools and government offices even though the native language of the Muslims is Yawi, a dialect of Malay spoken in neighboring Malaysia.

On Sunday night, three bombs exploded almost simultaneously at Buddhist temples in Narathiwat province's Takbai, Ruesoh and Rangae districts but there were no casualties.

Southern Thailand has witnessed an upsurge of violence in recent months, with arson attacks and almost daily shootings of police officers and government officials by gunmen riding motorcycles.

On April 28, suspected Islamic militants launched a wave of coordinated attacks on military outposts in Pattani, Narathiwat and Songkhla provinces but were repulsed with overwhelming force in clashes that left 107 of the poorly armed militants and five security personnel dead.

Japan seeks amnesty for alleged defector

TOKYO (AP)—Tokyo plans to ask the United States to grant amnesty to an alleged U.S. Army defector who married a Japanese woman kidnapped by North Korea, an official said Sunday.

Charles Robert Jenkins, an American who married Hitomi Soga in the North after she was kidnapped from her coastal Japanese hometown in 1978, is wanted by Washington for allegedly deserting his U.S. Army post and defecting to the North in the 1960s.

Soga is among five Japanese who were kidnapped by the North decades ago and returned to Japan in 2002.

All five have relatives still in North Korea. Tokyo is trying to secure their release—but Washington may request Jenkins' extradition if he comes to Japan.

Shinzo Abe, the No. 2 official in the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, said on a Sunday TV talk show that he hoped the United States would make an exception for Jenkins

"based on the importance of the our relationship as allies."

Tokyo plans to ask Washington to either grant Jenkins amnesty or exempt him from prosecution, the Yomiuri newspaper reported Sunday. Japan also hopes the couple's two daughters will be allowed to leave the North.

Japan has already unofficially raised the issue with the United States, but has been told the U.S. president or defense secretary must make the decision, the newspaper said.

World

Iraq insurgents drive Italians from base

By CHRISTOPHER TORCHIA
AP WRITER

BAGHDAD, Iraq (AP)—Fighters loyal to radical cleric Muqtada al-Sadr drove Italian forces from a base in the southern city of Nasiriyah on Sunday and attacked coalition headquarters there with grenade and mortar fire as tensions in the Shiite region escalated. Two U.S. soldiers died elsewhere.

Gunmen also killed three Iraqi women working for the U.S.-led coalition.

Two Iraqi fighters were killed and 20 were wounded in battles in Nasiriyah, mostly at two bridges crossing the Euphrates River, residents said.

The Italian troops evacuated as their base came under repeated attack. Portuguese police were called out to support the Italians, seeing action for the first time since the force of 128 deployed to Nasiriyah in November, a Portuguese duty officer said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

At least 10 Italians were wounded, one of the critically, contingent spokesman Lt. Col. Giuseppe Perrone told The Associated Press by phone. He said the Italians relocated to the nearby Tallil air base.

Elsewhere in Nasiriyah, a convoy transporting the Italian official in charge of the city, Barbara Contini, came under attack as it neared the headquarters of the U.S.-led Coalition Provisional Authority, Perrone said. Two Italian paramilitary police were wounded.

Fighting in the southern city began Friday. All but two civilian staffers of the coalition were evacuated from their



Iraqis lean over a dead family member as the body arrives for the funeral ceremony from the city of Amarah to the holy city of Najaf, Iraq, Sunday May 16, 2004.

headquarters in Nasiriyah to a by al-Sadr's fighters. The radical cleric launched an uprising

Rice: Russia, US agree on Iraq plan

MOSCOW (AP)—The United States and Russia agree broadly on how to bring stability to Iraq, U.S. National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice said in an interview to be broadcast Sunday. "I think we, the United States and Russia, share a common understanding of how we should move forward," Rice said in an interview with the NTV television channel.

Rice spoke after a day of meetings in Moscow with President Vladimir Putin, Prime Minister Mikhail Fradkov and high-ranking Russian security and economic officials.

The subject of Iraq dominated the visit, which had been planned for months, but Rice also discussed a wide range of bilateral, regional and international issues including the U.S. interest in promoting

democracy and reform as a way of combatting extremism in the Middle East.

Rice told Russian officials that the United States would share the draft resolution it is preparing for the U.N. Security Council on Iraq as soon as it has been written, said a senior U.S. diplomat who briefed reporters on condition of anonymity.

The diplomat declined to divulge the contents of a letter Rice carried to Putin from President Bush, saying only that it was a "general affirmation of our desire to work with them on Iraq and on the broader partnership."

He said that in her meetings, Rice "stressed the importance of empowering the new government to have the authority to govern, while at the same time

working out arrangements for security, which will depend on multinational forces at least for some time to come."

The U.S. government plans to hand over control to a caretaker Iraqi government on June 30, but the United States will continue to be responsible for security in the country.

Deputy Foreign Minister Yuri Fedotov said last week that Russia is prepared to work toward the adoption of a new U.N. Security Council resolution on Iraq, but first wants an agreement on what steps should be taken to legitimize a new Iraqi government. He said Russia wouldn't oppose the deployment of international forces in Iraq after June 30, as long as there was a clear U.N. mandate detailing their duties and length of stay.

last month and faces an arrest warrant in the murder of a rival moderate cleric last year.

Elsewhere in southern Iraq, assailants in Basra fired a mortar shell that hit a house near a British military base, killing four Iraqi civilians, including 2-year-old twin girls, witnesses said. Four people were wounded. All the victims were related.

Also, gunmen fired on a minibus and detonated explosives in Baghdad on Sunday, killing two Iraqi women and the driver and injuring another woman. Police said the women were working for the Americans but did not specify their jobs.

Early Sunday, a female Iraqi translator working with U.S. troops was killed and another was

critically injured when gunmen broke into their houses in Mahmoudiyah, said Dawood al-Tae, director of the city's hospital.

The civilian killings appeared to be part of a rebel strategy to deter cooperation between Iraqis and the coalition, which plans to hand over sovereignty on June 30.

One U.S. soldier was killed Saturday night when a bomb exploded beside a vehicle in Baghdad, the Army said Sunday. A second soldier died of wounds suffered during a firefight Saturday south of the capital, the military said.

No further details were released.

The deaths bring to 777 the number of U.S. service

members who have died since the beginning of military operations in Iraq last year. Of those, 567 died as a result of hostile action and 210 died of non-hostile causes.

In central Baghdad, several explosions were heard near the U.S.-controlled Green Zone. It was unclear what caused the blasts, but smoke could be seen rising from the west side of the Tigris River.

The coalition is trying to disband al-Sadr's army and sideline its radical leadership before handing power to a new Iraqi government. American forces and al-Sadr fighters fought heavy battles in recent days in the southern holy cities of Najaf and Karbala.

Lawyer makes sure troops stick to rules

FALLUJAH, Iraq (AP)—A military lawyer assembled the guards at the jail on the 1st Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment's desert base to convey the latest orders: it is no longer permissible to hood Iraqi detainees. Blindfolds will suffice.

The practice was banned by the U.S. command after the scandal erupted over treatment of inmates at the Abu Ghraib prison near Baghdad. With the international outcry over the abuse captured in photographs shown worldwide, the Marines are being extra careful to go by the book in their handling of suspects.

"Sandbagging is now prohibited," said Capt. Jamie McCall, referring to the practice of putting bags over the heads of Iraqi suspects rounded up in raids or captured in combat.

A graduate of the University of Pittsburgh law school, McCall, 29, is a member of the Judge Advocate General's Corps.

The battalion sees him as their in-house lawyer, and commander Lt. Col. Brennan Byrne calls McCall his "legal beagle."

"I am here to answer their questions about all legal issues," said McCall, from Wilmington, Del.

These days, McCall is busier than ever.

The scandal over the U.S. Army's treatment of inmates at Abu Ghraib prison—less than an hour's drive from this battalion's base—shocked many Marines who take pride in their elite training and credo.

"Those people who did this will absolutely face some stiff penalties," Byrne said.

The first defendant goes on

trial Wednesday in Baghdad.

However, the Marine record in Iraq is not spotless. Two Marines at Camp Pendleton, Calif., face courts-martial on charges including assault and dereliction of duty in the death of an Iraqi prisoner in their custody last year in the southern city of Nasiriyah.

Before getting to Abu Ghraib, McCall said, each Iraqi detainee passes two levels of screening—at the detention center with the unit that captured him, then, if initial questioning determines his detention should continue, at a division-level detention.

Only after division screening shows "compelling evidence" that prisoners should be held are they taken to a third-level prison such as Abu Ghraib, where a magistrate court sits and decides the fate of each prisoner, McCall said.

Dominican president Mejia concedes defeat

SANTO DOMINGO, Dominican Republic (AP)—President Hipolito Mejia conceded defeat late Sunday in an election marked by an outpouring of public anger over the Dominican Republic's worst economic crisis in decades.

Mejia told reporters he was recognizing former President Leonel Fernandez as victor with only 3 percent of results officially released.

"After this first bulletin I am conceding defeat. Leonel has won," Mejia said, saying his own party's exit polls suggested Fernandez would win with 54 percent of the vote to his 37 percent.

"I congratulate the Dominican Liberation Party and President Leonel Fernandez," he said. "He who won won and he who lost lost. I believe in democracy."

Fernandez didn't immediately speak publicly, but small fireworks exploded in the sky and Fernandez's supporters drove through the streets of Santo Domingo honking horns.

An independent exit poll cited by Fernandez's party gave the former president 54.5 percent to Mejia's 31 percent, with Eduardo Estrella trailing at 12 percent. The survey was conducted Sunday by U.S.-based firm Penn, Schoen and Berland Associates, and involved some 3,000 voters with a 3 percentage point margin of error.

Desperate for relief from a severe economic downturn, Dominicans turned out by the millions to vote in the election, which saw scattered complaints of irregularities and violence that left at least three

dead and three wounded.

A clash first broke out in a voting line outside a school in the southwestern town of Barahona when a supporter of Mejia and a backer of Fernandez pulled guns and opened fire during an argument, observers said.

The two men were killed, as was another Mejia supporter who tried to intervene, said Moises Benamor, an observer from the Organization of American States. Two others were hospitalized with wounds, and three were detained for questioning, police said.

On the outskirts of Santo Domingo, meanwhile, journalists saw armed men in a vehicle fire into the air and unsuccessfully try to steal ballot boxes in a clash that left one man with a stab wound in the thigh.



Mejia

US forces battle militiamen in Baghdad

By SCHEHEREZADE FARAMARZI
AP WRITER

NAJAF, Iraq (AP)—U.S. forces stepped up pressure on Shiite gunmen loyal to radical cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, pushing with tanks into the holy city of Kufa and assaulting militia positions in the narrow streets of a Shiite enclave in Baghdad. At least 34 Iraqis were killed.

Meanwhile, a bomb went off Sunday night at a Baghdad hotel used by foreign contractors, ripping through the bar and wounding six people, including British and Nepalese, a hotel employee and police said.

The bomb struck the Four Seasons Hotel in central Baghdad and tore apart chairs and part of the ceiling in the bar, where the six injured were sitting, the employee said. He said the bomb was placed outside the hotel.

Police Lt. Col. Ahmad Al-Alawi told al-Arabiyah television that two Britons, two Nepalese and two Iraqi guards were slightly wounded. Many Nepalese in Iraq serve as security guards for private companies.

The U.S. military also said a 24-year-old military policeman will be the first soldier to face a court-martial in the abuse of Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib prison.

Spc. Jeremy C. Sivits, a member of the 372nd Military Police Company, has been charged with conspiracy to maltreat subordinates and detainees, dereliction of duty for negligently failing to protect detainees from abuse and cruelty and maltreatment of detainees, Brig. Gen. Mark Kimmitt said.

The court-martial will be held May 19 in Baghdad, and Kimmitt said it will be open to the media. If convicted, Siv-

its faces one year in prison, demotion or a discharge for bad conduct, military officials said.

The rest of the seven soldiers charged in the abuse likely will face trials where they could get more severe punishments—suggesting the military was starting the courts-martial with one of the lesser figures in the scandal.

The heaviest fighting in Baghdad came when militiamen from al-Sadr's Al-Mahdi Army attacked police stations and set up checkpoints in the Shiite neighborhood of Sadr City, a heavily populated district in the eastern part of the capital, Kimmitt said.

U.S. troops moved in and secured two police stations in fighting that killed 18 militiamen, Kimmitt said.

Earlier, an explosion tore apart shops in a market in the western Biyaa district. The blast occurred when police tried to dismantle two bombs found in vendors' stalls, witnesses said. Four people were killed and 17 were wounded, the Health Ministry said. Kimmitt said three people were killed.

"Is this the freedom that they want—people cut into pieces?," one man at the market, Fadhil Farid, cried. "What did we do wrong?"

At about the same time, gunmen opened fire on a U.S. patrol in western Baghdad, sparking a firefight that killed three Iraqi police, two civilians and one of the attackers, Kimmitt said. Fighters attacked another patrol in the center of the capital, wounding two Iraqi policemen.

The U.S. foray into Kufa was the deepest move yet into the city, an al-Mahdi Army stronghold. Several tanks pushed as close as 500 yards from Kufa's main mosque, trading fire with

Iran Council passes law banning torture

TEHRAN, Iran (AP)—Iran's hard-line ruling Guardian Council has passed a law banning the use of torture, effective immediately, a judiciary official said Sunday.

The council, which rejected at least three similar proposals in the past, approved the law's Thursday—one day after Iran's judiciary chief ordered it, said Nasser

Hosseini, a judiciary official.

"For courts, it's obligatory to implement the law after it is approved by the Guardian Council," he said.

Human rights groups have long complained about the use of torture against detainees, including intellectuals and political activists.

In November, a special U.N. envoy visited Iran and said he received

"many complaints" about human rights violations, including torture, from pro-reform dissidents, writers and activists.

Hard-line officials have denied the practice.

"I hope the law provides enough protection for prisoners who have complained about torture," reformist lawmaker Rajab Ali Mazroui said.

UK's Blair apologizes for abuses in Iraq

LONDON (AP)—Prime Minister Tony Blair apologized Sunday for any abuses committed by British soldiers in Iraq, and said those responsible would be punished.

As the government acknowledged it had known for months about claims that its troops abused Iraqi prisoners, lawmakers called for the publication of an International Committee of the

Red Cross report detailing many of the allegations. Human rights group Amnesty International said it told British officials about reports of violence and torture a year ago.

"We apologize deeply to anyone who has been mistreated by any of our soldiers," Blair told French television during a visit to Paris. "That is absolutely and totally un-

acceptable. Those who are responsible for this, if they have behaved in this appalling way, they will be punished according to the army discipline and rules."

However, he added, "The activities of a few people who have brought shame to their situation should not detract from the work done by the vast majority."

militiamen on both sides of the main road, witnesses said. Tanks also moved into the neighborhood on the other side of Kufa, trading fire with fighters.

Two civilians were killed and 10 others—including two children—were wounded in the battles, hospital officials said. Three houses were destroyed. The tanks pulled out of the city in the afternoon.

"It was the first time the Americans came this far," said Odai Abdulkarim, 24, a mechanic who has a shop off the highway leading to the Kufa mosque, where al-Sadr regularly leads Friday prayers. "We are

afraid for our families, afraid the rockets would hit our house."

"Americans don't hit you if you don't hit them," interjected Haidar Abu Zaid, 35, another mechanic. "The al-Mahdi Army fires from our areas, so they have no choice but to fire at them—and we end up getting hurt."

Also Sunday, scattered clashes occurred between U.S. and militia forces in the industrial area of Najaf, where al-Sadr sought refuge last month. Plumes of black smoke could be seen rising from the area. Iraqi police and U.S. tanks blocked the main road from Najaf to nearby Kufa, residents said.

Sharon readies new Gaza withdrawal plan

JERUSALEM (AP)—Prime Minister Ariel Sharon on Sunday canceled a planned trip to the United States next week, saying he intended to focus his energies on patching together a new blueprint for withdrawing from the Gaza Strip after his party rejected his original plan.

Sharon told his Cabinet ministers during a stormy meeting that he will present them with a revised version of his "disengagement plan" in the next three weeks. He did not reveal what changes he is contemplating or how he would satisfy his deeply divided coalition.

The announcement was the latest sign of Sharon's determination to push ahead with his plan after its overwhelming defeat in a May 2 referendum of Likud Party members. That vote, though nonbinding, would make it difficult for many Likud Cabinet ministers to support the plan.

Sharon told his Cabinet he was canceling his trip to Washington, scheduled for next week, during which he was to have addressed the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, a pro-Israel lobbying group. He also had been expected to meet with President Bush, who had endorsed Sharon's plan as a valuable step to reviving peace efforts.

The original plan called for a full pullout of Gaza, where 7,500 Israeli

settlers and 1.3 million Palestinians live, and a withdrawal from four small West Bank settlements. Sharon said the plan to disentangle the Israeli and Palestinian populations would boost Israel's security in the absence of a peace deal.

Vice Premier Ehud Olmert said Friday that Sharon still intends to evacuate all Gaza settlements.

Hard-liners in the government oppose any territorial concessions and some Likud ministers, who gave the plan only tepid support in the first place, have said they will not go against the party's decision.

At the same time, Justice Minister Yosef Lapid of the moderate Shinui Party has threatened to quit the government if Sharon does not push forward with the Gaza withdrawal. He dismissed the Likud referendum, saying that 1 percent of the population should not be allowed to decide policy for the country.

As Lapid addressed the Cabinet meeting, two hard-line ministers, Avigdor Lieberman and Benny Elon, walked out, participants said.

Lapid also got into a shouting match with minister Uzi Landau, a Likud hard-liner. Landau and his allies said it was undemocratic to ignore the referendum, and he said there was no chance the Cabinet would pass a new plan.



Israeli soldiers stand next to masked and handcuffed Palestinians after they arrested them inside a tunnel in Rafah, in the southern Gaza Strip, Sunday May 9, 2004. The Israeli army said it had discovered a weapons-smuggling tunnel in Rafah, along the Egyptian border, in an overnight raid. The army said it had arrested a number of Palestinians in the tunnel.

AP

Venezuela arrests Colombian fighters

EL HATILLO, Venezuela (AP)—President Hugo Chavez charged Sunday that dozens of suspects arrested in raid Sunday are Colombian insurgents involved in a plot against his government.

Chavez said 53 Colombian right-wing paramilitary fighters were arrested in a raid on a farm earlier in the day, and another 24 recruits were caught after fleeing into the countryside.

In his weekly broadcast, Chavez said the suspects were training to strike at his government. He didn't elaborate but said the arrests were proof of a conspiracy that involved Venezuelan exiles as well as Colombians.

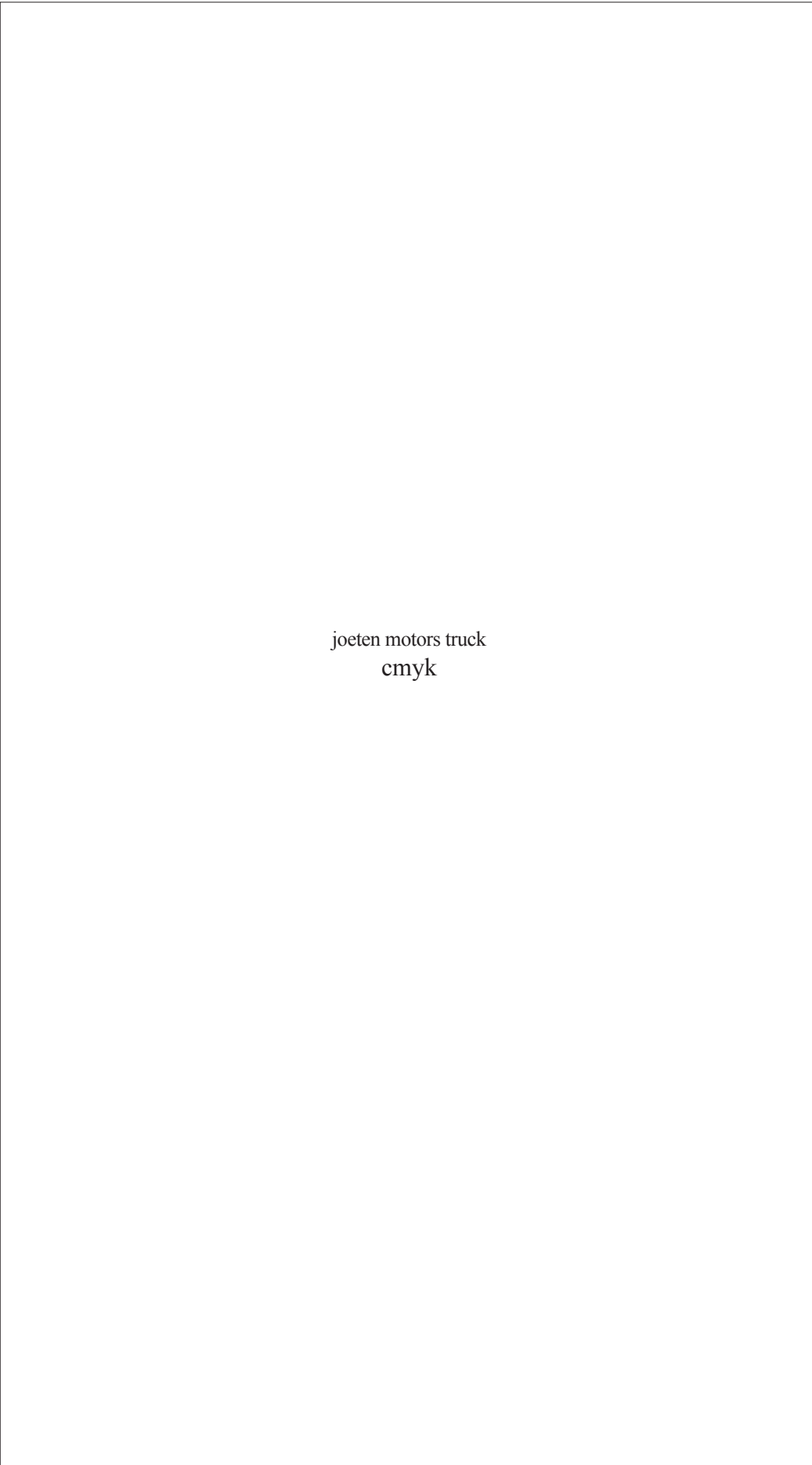
Chavez has frequently claimed that Venezuela's opposition, including a number of military officers who supported the April 2002 coup, have conspired to overthrow his government, with Washington's backing. The United States rejects the charges.

Opposition leaders said the raids were a government-hatched scheme meant to divert attention from their presidential recall effort. The effort to force a recall vote is entering a decisive phase.

Venezuelans are divided between those who accuse Chavez of trying to perpetuate his rule by moving toward a Cuban-style dictatorship, and his followers who applaud his social programs targeted to the poor majority.

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Life & Style

Billions of cicadas set to mate

By STEPHEN MANNING
AP WRITER

Now's the time to make their move: Billions of the red-eyed insects, who get only one chance every 17 years to mate, are crawling their way above ground for this rare opportunity.

Scientists say this year's batch, known as Brood X, is the largest of the cicada groups that appear at various intervals.

For Raupp and other "Cicadamanians" at the University of Maryland, it's also a rare opportunity to get the word out about what they say is a harmless, remarkable natural event.

"We've been able to calm a lot of people down," said graduate student Jenna Jadin.

Raupp heads a team of about a dozen graduate students who have been furiously writing cicada cookbooks, teaching classes at schools as far away as Ohio and working with landscapers to minimize plant damage from the expected hoard.

The team has fielded a steady stream of phone calls: Gardeners fret about their plants, pet owners wonder if their dogs

will get sick from scarfing the creatures, and even a few frazzled event planners worry about cicadas dive-bombing brides at outdoor weddings.

Ultimately, the goal of the cicadamanians is to calm those fears, even if a few of the slow flying cicadas might mistakenly bounce off a forehead or two.

Caution is in order, however, for would-be cicada gourmets. An Indiana man who ate nearly 30 sauteed cicadas had an allergic reaction and had to be treated with antihistamines, steroids and a shot of adrenaline.

The experience wasn't all bad, apparently.

"He said they didn't taste too bad, but his wife didn't care for the aroma," said Dr. Al Ripani, the doctor who treated the man Thursday at a Bloomington hospital.

The University of Maryland's department of entomology's "Cicada-licious" cookbook, which includes recipes for Cicada Stir-Fry and Cicada Dumplings, contains a disclaimer urging people to consult a doctor before eating cicadas.

The first of the cicada

nymphs emerged last week from their holes and crawled up nearby trees to molt, shedding their hard skins and emerging with wings. Those that survive the birds, squirrels and other predators will mate, lay eggs and die over the next several weeks.

This particular batch emerges only once every 17 years in the mid-Atlantic region and Midwest. They come out in force - as many as 1.5 million per acre in some places.

That kind of cicada explosion can be downright terrifying for those who fear bugs. But for entomologists, it's a chance that comes along only a few times in a career to study cicadas in the wild.

Many get a bit giddy.

In his lab, Raupp perches cicadas on his face for the benefit of a visitor. Driving to one of his makeshift study sites, he cuts short a conversation with an excited shout as he points out a cicada buzzing across the windshield.

A perpetually busy man, he's been spending recent nights shepherding a film crew



After a 17-year nap one of the newly emerged Cicadas is seen drying its wings after shedding its skin in a suburban Washington yard, Saturday, May 15, 2004.
AP

through shoots of emerging nymphs and his days handling calls from reporters as far away as Finland. Still, he knows it's a rare thing for entomologists to become instant celebrities.

"The press is going to leave

us like a bad date when this is over," he quipped.

Pulling up to a University Park home, Raupp leaps out of his minivan and starts grabbing as many wiggling cicadas as he finds. He spent most of the pre-

vious night in the home's yard, fighting off hungry squirrels so that the film crew could have something left to shoot.

"This is wild and crazy good fun," he said. "This is what we live for."

'We Are the Future' concert benefit held

By NICOLE WINFIELD
AP WRITER

ROME (AP)—Nearly two decades after music greats gathered to record the hit song "We are the World" to benefit Africa's hungry, the next generation of celebrities came together Sunday for a follow-up "We are the Future" concert to benefit children in war zones.

The concert, which opened as the sun set over Rome's Circus Maximus and continued after midnight, started with a performance by the garbage-can-clanging percussion group Stomp and featured dozens of acts from around the world.

Oprah Winfrey welcomed the tens of thousands of people to the event and reminded them that it was occurring just weeks after the world marked the 10th anniversary of the genocide in Rwanda, "where it seemed the world turned its back."

"But that's all changing tonight because we are all here," she said. "We are all here to stand up for the children."

Musicians Alicia Keys, Andrea Bocelli and Carlos Santana performed live over the course of the evening, and Norah Jones sang in a prerecorded video. Israeli, Palestinian, Pakistani, Colombian and South African artists joined actress Angelina Jolie, model Naomi Campbell and actress Natassja Kinski,



Australian 'Stomp' performers play during the "We Are The Future" music concert in Rome's Circo Massimo, Sunday May 16, 2004.
AP

who were presenters.

Quincy Jones, who produced the 1985 "We are the World" recording that featured the likes of Michael Jackson, Lionel Richie and Bob Dylan, organized Sunday's five-plus hour concert, which will raise money for child care centers in Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sierra Leone, Afghanistan, Rwanda and the West Bank.

Santana brought a decidedly political message to his act, telling the crowd: "We are the other side of America. We are not Bush!"

The concert was free but proceeds from broadcast rights, donations and related sales will go to fund the centers. The con-

cert was broadcast live on MTV in Italy and a shorter version will air at later dates in other MTV markets. It was also being shown in real-time on the Yahoo! Web site.

A DVD, a book and a live recording of the concert are also expected to go on sale. The recording is to feature a new song "We are the Future" written and produced by Jones.

Organizers hope to repeat the enormous success of the "We are the World" single. The song, recorded by 43 artists in a Los Angeles studio after the American Music Awards in January 1985, became an instant and international hit, playing incessantly on

radio stations and MTV.

T-shirts, posters, books and videos boosted fundraising to fight hunger in Africa via an organization called USA for Africa, which by 1991 had raised more than \$61 million. Most of the money went to care for refugees of Sudan and Ethiopia, whose emaciated images shocked the world in the mid-1980s.

That relief effort came a year after another star-studded initiative for the hungry in Africa produced the hit single, "Do They Know It's Christmas."

In the audience, Tiziana Tazzari, 48, said she remembered the "We are the World" single, and wanted to introduce her 12-year-old daughter, Olga, to its successor event.

"I was around 20 years ago, but my memory is vague," she said. "This time I can for my daughter, so she could experience it."

But Tazzari conceded that Olga, like many other Italians attending the concert, was more interested in seeing Italian soccer great Francesco Totti than learning about the plight of children in war zones.

The concert, which was organized in partnership with the World Bank, also launched the third annual "Glocalization" conference, to be held Monday in Rome. The event brings together local leaders to discuss international problems.

'Wicked, 'I Am My Own Wife' top plays

NEW YORK (AP)—"Wicked" was chosen best musical of the New York theater season, and "I Am My Own Wife" by Doug Wright was named best play in awards given Sunday by the Drama Desk, an organization of theater journalists and critics.

"Wicked," based on Gregory Maguire's cult novel about the witches in Oz before Dorothy arrives on the Yellow Brick Road, took six Drama Desk honors. "Assassins," a revival of the Stephen Sondheim-John Weidman musical, about presidential killers picked up four prizes, including the award for musical revival.

The Lincoln Center Theater production of "Henry IV" received three awards, including a top acting honor for its star, Kevin Kline, who played Falstaff. The Shakespeare drama also won for play-revival and for director-play, Jack O'Brien.

Phylicia Rashad, who portrays the determined matriarch in the revival of "A Raisin in the Sun," and Viola Davis, a lonely seamstress in off-Broadway's "Intimate Apparel," tied in the leading actress-play category.

Hugh Jackman, whose portrayal of flamboyant entertainer Peter Allen galvanizes "The Boy From Oz," was named best actor in a musical. Donna Murphy, the wry, older sister in the revival of "Wonderful Town," was named best actress-musical.

Featured-acting prizes in the play categories went to Ned Beatty, Big Daddy in a revival of Tennessee Williams' "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof," and Audra McDonald, the patient, hardworking wife in "A Raisin in the Sun."

Winners in the featured-acting musical categories were Isabel Keating, who plays Judy Garland in "The Boy From Oz," and Raul Esparza, the extravagant narrator in the Boy George musical "Taboo."

Jefferson Mays, who portrays a German transvestite who survives both the Nazis and the communists in "I Am My Own Wife," won the solo performance award.

Besides best musical, "Wicked" received prizes for its direction, Joe Mantello; lyrics, Stephen Schwartz; book, Winnie Holzman; sets, Eugene Lee (a tie with John Lee Beatty for "Twentieth Century"), and costumes, Susan Hilferty.

'Troy' slays box office competition

By **ANTHONY BREZNICAN**
AP ENTERTAINMENT WRITER

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Muscle-bound Brad Pitt fought his way through scrawnier competition to help the Greek epic "Troy" claim the top spot at the box office with \$45.6 million.

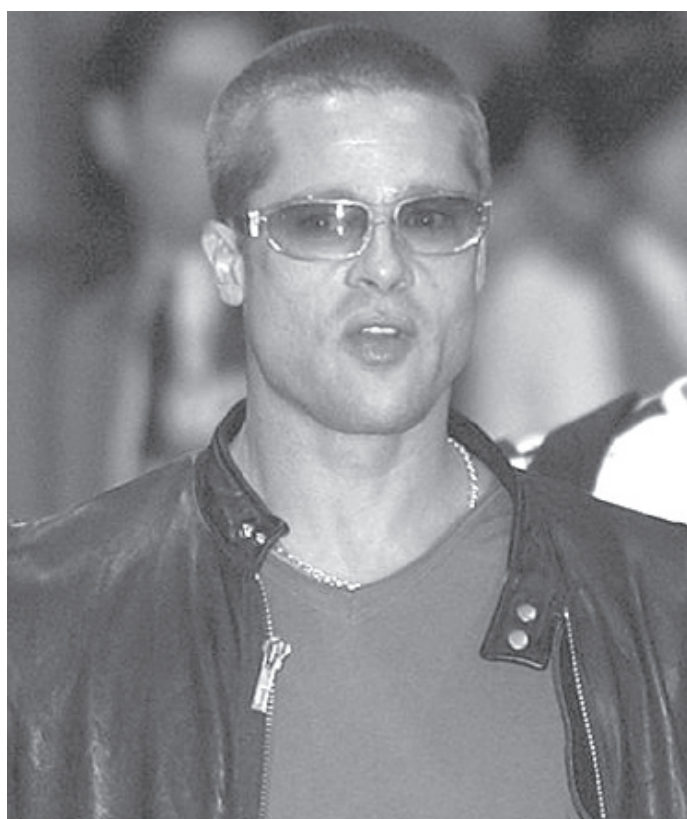
A handful of older movies aimed at teenagers continued to dominate the top 10.

Lindsay Lohan's high school comedy "Mean Girls" continued its strong run with \$10.1 million for third place, dropping only 26 percent in its third week. "13 Going on 30" fell only 28 percent to earn \$4.2 million for sixth place. Even the Olsen twins bomb "New York Minute" fell by a relatively small 37 percent to earn \$3.7 million in seventh place.

Most movies this time of year see earnings drop 50 percent or more each week.

"These are very minimal drops, which shows that the most consistent audience right now is young girls," said Paul Dergarabedian, president of box-office tracker Exhibitor Relations Co. "There are teen guys in the theaters, too. But I'll bet you it's the female in the couple deciding which movie they go to see."

That may also have been a factor with "Troy," which



AP
American movie star Brad Pitt arrives at Narita International Airport in Narita, east of Tokyo Saturday evening, May 15, 2004.

boasted hunky stars Pitt, Orlando Bloom and Eric Bana.

The film's audience was split equally between male and female viewers, according to Dan Fellman, head of distribution for Warner Bros., which released the movie. "Males liked it because of the action and epic adventure of the movie. The fe-

males liked it because of Brad, Orlando and Eric," he said.

Meanwhile, the Dracula, Wolf Man and Frankenstein action-adventure "Van Helsing" saw 61 percent of its audience turn to dust in its second week, falling to No. 2 with \$20.1 million for a cumulative total of \$84.5 million, according to

studio estimates Sunday.

Despite the apparently strong earnings for "Troy" and "Van Helsing," their massive budgets and the intensity of the summer movie competition suggest they will have a hard time earning their money back in North American theaters.

"Troy" cost a reported \$175 million to \$200 million to produce, while "Van Helsing" was in the \$160 million range. Add to each about \$50 million in marketing costs, and they will likely rely on international ticket sales and home video releases to show a profit.

Warner Bros. expressed satisfaction with "Troy" earnings, saying its debut compared favorably with 2000's R-rated "Gladiator," which earned \$34.8 million in its opening weekend and rode strong word-of-mouth praise to a \$187.6 million total, even before winning the Oscar for best picture.

The only other new movie to open in wide release was Jamie Foxx's anti-romantic comedy "Breakin' All the Rules," in which he played the author of a manual on how to leave your lover. It ranked in fourth place with \$5.3 million.

Many bombastic movies like "Troy" open with a handful of smaller films aimed at niche viewers. Studio heads think like

this: Black audiences who may be bored with armies of ancient white guys hacking each other in "Troy" had the option of "Breakin' All the Rules." On Memorial Day weekend, sensitive women who don't want to see the world end in "The Day After Tomorrow" can see perky Kate Hudson in "Raising Helen" instead.

The weekend's total box-office earnings were down 35 percent from last year, coming in at \$100.2 million. One movie made up most of the total \$154.6 million from the same time in 2003: "The Matrix Reloaded," which was No. 1 with \$97.1 million.

Estimated ticket sales for Friday through Sunday at North

American theaters, according to Exhibitor Relations Co. Inc. Final figures will be released Monday.

1. **"Troy,"** \$45.6 million
2. **"Van Helsing,"** \$20.1 million.
3. **"Mean Girls,"** \$10.1 million.
4. **"Breakin' All the Rules,"** \$5.3 million.
5. **"Man on Fire,"** \$5.2 million.
6. **"13 Going on 30,"** \$4.2 million.
7. **"New York Minute,"** \$3.7 million.
8. **"Laws of Attraction,"** \$2 million.
9. **"Kill Bill—Vol. 2,"** \$1.6 million.
10. **"Godsend,"** \$1 million.

Caviezel plays golfing god in 'Jones' tale

By **DAVID GERMAIN**
AP MOVIE WRITER

CANNES, France (AP)—Jim Caviezel has gone from the ultimate peacemaker to a guy who hurls golf clubs in rage. Caviezel, who played Jesus in Mel Gibson's blockbuster "The Passion of the Christ," has the title role in "Bobby Jones: Stroke of Genius," a film biography about the golfing great whose personal demons included a fierce temper.

The actor played basketball in college but was not a golfer. Luckily, Jones, a golf champion for much of the 1920s, left be-

hind a series of how-to films that Caviezel scrutinized.

"I'd watch his footage and then watch what I was doing, his natural swing and mine," Caviezel, 35, said Sunday at the Cannes Film Festival, where he was promoting "Bobby Jones" in the Cannes market, one of the world's biggest showcases for movies seeking international distributors. "I think we were able to get it close, maybe 95 percent, but his flexibility was something I didn't have."

"You really have to work at that game, but it's really great for actors because of the mental, physical and spiritual.

There's a kind of combo thing that when it all comes together, what a feeling. The same thing you get in acting."

"Bobby Jones" opened weakly in late April in the United States, pulling in just \$1.2 million over opening weekend from a fairly wide release of 1,332 theaters. Caviezel hopes the feel-good movie, with its positive message of perseverance through adversity, will find an audience on home video and in theaters overseas.

Gibson's "The Passion" vaulted Caviezel into unfamiliar blockbuster territory. The \$368 million U.S. and Canadian haul

for "The Passion" is about \$80 million more than the combined grosses for the other 10 movies in which Caviezel has had a significant role.

No Hollywood studio would touch "The Passion," which weathered fierce criticism from some Jewish and Christian leaders who said the movie could revive old accusations that Jews collectively were responsible for Christ's death.

Gibson hired a distributor to release "The Passion" and now stands to make \$250 million or more off it, according to estimates in Hollywood trade papers.

Filmmakers worry about Tibet film footage

CANNES, France (AP)—Two filmmakers at Cannes took extreme precautions Sunday to make sure the people they interviewed for a rare documentary filmed in Tibet would not face a crack-down by Chinese authorities.

To make sure the footage did not fall into the wrong hands, moviegoers were searched at the door for cameras and recording devices.

"What Remains of Us," playing at the Cannes Film Festival, offers a rare and moving look at ordinary people in Tibet talking frankly about the hardships of the Chinese occupation.

Over eight years, two Canadian filmmakers posed as tourists

to make risky trips into Tibet, interviewing people in monasteries, tents, fields and homes. They have been cautious to ensure their subjects cannot be identified and punished by Chinese authorities.

Despite the dangers, most Tibetans were happy to speak, even on camera, said one of the directors, Hugo Latulippe.

"The world doesn't listen much to their story," Latulippe said. "So when foreigners come, they want to speak about their problems."

The filmmakers put themselves at risk by smuggling in a video message from the Dalai Lama, the Tibetan spiritual

leader exiled in India. People in Tibet can be arrested merely for having a photo of the Nobel Peace Prize winner, who is peacefully pressing for Tibetan autonomy.

The movie's premise is simple: The filmmakers stored the Dalai Lama's message in a tiny laptop and secretly showed it to Tibetans. Then they recorded people's reactions.

The most moving scenes show Tibetans crouched around the tiny computer screen. One elderly woman with a deeply lined face weeps as she clutches a small child. Stylish teenage girls in a city apartment break into tears.

In a cold and wind-swept

field, a family kneels on the grass around the screen, hands pressed together in prayer.

In the message, the Dalai Lama says that while China is still deeply repressive, it is in the midst of change. He also asks people to study and work hard to prepare for a better future.

"Tibet, and we the Tibetans, deserve respect," he says.

To protect the identity of the listeners, the filmmakers shot many of their scenes in hard-to-reach areas. They also interspersed footage from different regions to make it tougher to guess where scenes were shot. Since the film wrapped, they have made as few copies as possible.

wallace

Happily single women are ready with a comeback

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN

DEAR ABBY: I just finished reading one of your columns on why a woman could be president. Then, at the bottom, a woman signed "On the Spot in Tucson" asked what she should say when people ask her why she isn't married yet. You advised her, "Just tell the truth—the right person hasn't asked me."

Why should she act like SHE can't ask a man to marry HER? Surely, if women can be president, women can ask men to marry them. Her answer should be, "I haven't met a man (or woman) I want to marry!"

JOAN JACOBUS, MEMBER OF N.O.W.

DEAR JOAN: Not only can women ask men to marry them, but many do. However, the woman who wrote that letter asked because the question made her feel defensive, and your response might make a man feel like he wasn't worth considering. Read on:

DEAR ABBY: I was 44 before I married, and my wonderful husband was well worth the wait. When I was asked why I wasn't married, I used to say, "Just lucky, I guess." Sometime during my single years, I finally realized that if one isn't happy being single, he or she will not be happy being married either. That attitude prepared me for a husband, delightful adult stepchildren and beautiful grandchildren.

CONTENT PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

DEAR CONTENT: I couldn't agree with you more. You're a wise lady.

DEAR ABBY: I had a great-aunt who lived to be 91 and never married. Her response to that question was, "Because I never met a man who deserved to be as happy as I could make him!"

KATHRYN C. IN CINCINNATI

DEAR KATHRYN C.: I think I know why no one ever popped the question.

DEAR ABBY: I, too, was plagued by that annoying and rude question. I had the following posted on my desk at work for inspiration:

I'M NOT MARRIED BECAUSE:

- (1) You haven't asked me yet.
- (2) Because I just love hearing people ask me that question.
- (3) My fiancé is waiting until after the parole is granted.
- (4) I'm still hoping for a shot at Miss/Mr. America.
- (5) I already have enough laundry to do, thank you!
- (6) I'm afraid my parents would drop dead from sheer happiness.
- (7) What? And lose all the money I've invested in personal ads?
- (8) I'm married to my career—although recently we have been considering a trial separation.
- (9) If I married, I'd have to forfeit my \$10 million trust fund.

USED TO BE THERE TOO, SEATTLE

DEAR USED TO BE THERE TOO: The common thread that runs through your responses is humor. And it's better to respond with humor to some questions than to become defensive. I'm sure it's not a question that is intended as a putdown. In fact, more often than not it is a roundabout way of saying, "I'm surprised a person as attractive as you hasn't been snatched up." And that's a compliment.

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

What teens need to know about sex, drugs, AIDS, and getting along with peers and parents is in "What Every Teen Should Know." To order, send a business-size, self-addressed envelope, plus check or money order for \$5 (U.S. funds only) to: Dear Abby, Teen Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Postage is included.)



Dear Abby

Report: Jammed phones skew 'Idol' tallies

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Many would-be "American Idol" voters are disenfranchised by overburdened phone lines and by "power dialers" who hog the system, the magazine Broadcasting & Cable reported.

According to the magazine's issue being released Monday, "the only people choosing the next 'American Idol' are the ones lucky enough to get through—or skilled enough to get around—tremendously overtaxed phone lines."

Fox TV, which airs the talent contest, has failed to address the difficulties viewers must overcome to log votes, the magazine said.

The show is a ratings winner and valuable property for its producers and Fox, but Broadcasting & Cable said the network is alienating viewers who repeatedly get a busy signal when they try to call in their votes.

The voting system has been called into question in recent weeks as contestants who appeared to be front-runners were dumped in favor of others who many viewers have complained were lesser performers. Last week, favorite La Toya London was voted off while Jasmine Trias survived a shaky performance.

Fox said both it and the show's producers have "gone to great lengths" to ensure the integrity of the voting process.

"While acknowledging that dedicated fans may be unhappy with the outcome, the system only reports the decision of the voting public," the network said in a statement.

The contest winner, who



AP Jasmine Trias of Mililani, Hawaii, one of three finalists in Fox television's "American Idol," smiles during a proclamation ceremony declaring it "Jasmine Trias Day" at the State Capitol building, Thursday, May 13, 2004 in Honolulu, Hawaii.

gets a record contract, will be decided in the series finale May 25-26. Trias, Fantasia Barrino and Diana DeGarmo are still in the running.

Questions about "Idol" voting are nothing new.

In last year's finale between Ruben Studdard and Clay Ai-

ken, a total of 24 million votes were recorded, with Studdard declared the winner by a slim 134,000-vote margin.

But on the same night, Verizon, the nation's largest phone company, saw its daily volume increase by 116 million calls while SBC reported a call-volume increase

of 115 million, according to Broadcasting & Cable.

That indicates a logjam in which millions of potential voters never got through, the magazine said.

Fox dismissed the allegation as speculative.

Viewers are allowed to vote repeatedly by phone during a two-hour window following the Tuesday show. Votes also can be cast by text messaging, which hasn't seen the same problems, the report said.

Jammed local phone lines, not the long-distance carrier network, creates the problem for callers, AT&T told the magazine.

Fox acknowledged there are times the phone network can't handle all calls due to the volume, but said it is using "the most sophisticated system available in the nation."

Ratings and call volume have risen over the show's three seasons.

Broadcasting & Cable said so-called power-dialers, who use fast Internet connections and computer autodialing software, also affect the outcome by the number of votes they are able to cast and by tying up lines so that others can't vote.

The magazine cited an August 2002 story by The Associated Press in which "American Idol" producers acknowledged power-dialers were casting thousands of votes.

In its statement Sunday, Fox said there are procedures in place to prevent individuals from "unfairly influencing the outcome of the voting," adding that producers can remove votes identified as power-dialing.

Celine Dion cancels Vegas shows

LAS VEGAS (AP)—Celine Dion canceled the weekend performances of her nightly show at Caesars Palace because the singer needed more time to recover from a sprained neck. Dion



Dion

had already canceled three performances of "A New Day ..." last week.

The singer been hampered by a sprained neck, which she aggravated while doing her show. The

singer's doctor examined her Friday and advised Dion that her recovery was not complete, show spokeswoman Kris Lingle said.

Dion, 36, is expected to resume performances on Wednesday. She is in the second year of a three-year engagement at the Las Vegas Strip hotel-casino.

'Raymond' signs deal for final season

NEW YORK (AP)—Three days before announcing its fall schedule, CBS sealed a deal Sunday to bring the Emmy-winning comedy "Everybody Loves Raymond" back for a ninth and final season.

Producer and star Ray Romano agreed to a shortened season with 16 new episodes. Most television shows make about 22 episodes a year.

"I look forward to being a hapless, sexless husband again in year nine," Romano said.

The Monday night comedy featuring Romano and his dysfunctional family won the 2003 Emmy for best comedy. The additional year was widely expected. Terms of the deal were not disclosed.

Romano reportedly made

about \$1.8 million per episode this season. Brad Garrett, who plays Romano's brother in the series, held out for more money before filming started for this season. The other cast members, Patricia Heaton, Peter Boyle and Doris Roberts also reached new deals for more money with the network last summer.

With "Friends," "Frasier" and "Sex and the City" all calling it quits this season, the deal gives "Everybody Loves Raymond" a victory lap where it won't be overshadowed by other comedies. "Raymond" also will be the highest-rated returning sitcom, a program genre in need of a transfusion of new talent.

Executive producer Phil Rosenthal said it was important to maintain quality and make

sure the show had not overstayed its welcome.

"Emotionally, we never want the show to end, but everything must," Rosenthal said. "We look forward to these remaining episodes as a few encores and a few more meals with our staff."

He and Romano realized they had more stories to tell, he said.

Romano, in a 2001 interview with The Associated Press, said he recalls sitcoms that overstayed their welcomes and had sour last years that spoiled memories of the show.

"Of course, they'll try to persuade me (to stay) with another reason, called money," Romano said. "They'll back up the truck, my wife is going to see it, and she's going to drive me to work."

Murray gets Jacksonville festival award

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (AP)—Bill Murray, who won a Golden Globe earlier this year for his role in "Lost in Translation," received a lifetime achievement award at the Jacksonville Film Festival. Murray, 53, kissed the award—a glass-and-wood turtle—then



Murray

made a face.

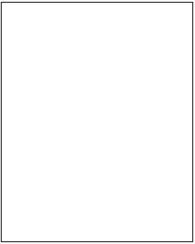
"I smell like the ocean," Murray said at the ceremony Saturday night. "It's the only award I have that does."

The Golden Globe was the first major acting prize for Murray, who gained fame in the 1970s as a goofball on TV's "Saturday Night Live" and continued that schtick in movies such as "Caddyshack" and "Meatballs."

"Lost in Translation," about two lonely Americans who find friendship in a Tokyo hotel, earned Murray an Oscar nomination.

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